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MEMORIES AND FANCIES

LAURA GARLAND CARR

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MEMORIES AND FANCIES

BY

LAURA GARLAND CARR ✓

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MEMORIES AND FANCIES



MEMORIES AND FANCIES.

A LANE.

Caverns of apple boughs frescoed with bloom,
Folding you close in a dainty perfume ;
Half a score bob-o-links, crazy as loons,
Giving you scraps of a hundred glad tunes ;
Orioles rolling out tones of delight,
Shaking the leaves as they flash through the white ;
Cat-birds a-mocking from over the wall,
Making the alders resound at each call ;
Fussy old bees, turning work into play,
Canning up sweets for a dull winter day ;
Soft, dripping waters that troughs overflow,
Darkening the mosses close crowded below ;
Wondering cows, looking up as they drink,
Plashing its brightness across the low brink ;
Sweet growing things creeping up to the light,
Fair flying creatures, too gay to alight ;
Far away glints of a cowslip-flecked green,
When the boughs sway, come like visions between ;

Winding and turning, you follow the lane,
Flickering sunbeams a falling like rain.

Where are you wandering? Ah! never heed.
Ways that are pleasant — why ask where they lead?

LIGHT.

I said, one morn, "O Earth, you're dull and gray;
There is no beauty in your snow and ice,
Nor fancy frost work, though in quaint device.
You're cold, oh, cold! You chill my heart to-day."

Lo, as I looked there came a gleam of light
Straight from the east. The icy fringes blazed;
Colors and flashes deepened as I gazed,
Till nought but glory met my raptured sight.

I said, one day, "O Life, you're little worth —
Made up of toil, and care, and blighted hope;
With pain and sin and all their ills to cope,
The day of death is better than of birth."

E'en as I spoke Love put a hand in mine,
And its dear presence drove all gloom away,
As shadows flee before the dawn of day,
And life became a heritage divine.

WHAT WAS IT?

Once, when a child, while bounding through
 My father's field, in joy complete,
I found a tiny flower that grew
 Deep in the grasses at my feet.
A single bloom, bell-shaped, pure white,
 It trembled on a slender stem.
Half pausing in my happy flight,
 It minded me of Aaron's hem,
With its "pomegranate and a bell,"
 I'd heard grandfather read about.
What linked the two I cannot tell;
 Some strange freak of the mind, no doubt.
I hurried on, leaving it there,
 With that one glance and that half thought.
Long after, though I looked with care,
 I never found the flower I sought.
Whene'er I cross a summer field,
 Or saunter through a flowery dell,
I think somewhere may be revealed,
 From grassy depths, my pearly bell.
It may have been a common weed,
 Transfigured in my childish eyes;
It may have been a random seed,
 Upspringing, grew that one fair prize.

I only know—I would not give
The memory of that little bloom
For rarest flowering plants that live,
Rich in their beauty and perfume.

FOUND.

The dismal rain was plashing,
And autumn winds blew chill,
The yellow leaves were falling,
Or lay, all dark and still,
In dank heaps drear, or outlined clear
On walk, and step, and sill.

My mind was like the weather—
With cloud and shade o'errun;
All pleasant thoughts together
Had vanished with the sun.
“Ah, me!” I said. “All joy is dead!
I wish the day were done.”

And then a bird's quick twitter
Came sharply from without.
The sound was out of season:
No songsters were about.
What bird so late could dare its fate
When autumn winds were out?

I peered among the maples
That sadly tossed and sighed,
Through vine and bushy shelters,
Where such small things might hide.
Another note from feathered throat!
Ah, then my bird I spied!

A draggled, lost canary,
With wings that drooped and clung;
He rested on the clothes-line
That roughly tipped and swung.
“Dear bird,” I cried, “with me abide ;”
And wide my door I flung.

With wav’ring flit and flutter,
He came close to my hand.
My cheek, one happy instant,
By little wings was fanned;
Then, as in doubt, he veered about
Across the soggy land.

The cage of my dead darling
Was brought to light again ;
With it I followed softly,
His confidence to gain.
With movements slow, and calling low,
I wooed him from the rain.

And now with saucy freeness
He rights each ruffled plume,
Noting, with droll side glances,
The strangeness of the room.
With perk and preen, this mite serene
Has banished all the gloom.

Who's lost a pet canary —
With olive throat and breast,
With wings all streaked with shadows,
And tiny, pompous crest,
With eyes so bright — just dots of light?
Who claims my little guest?

HER SHAWL.

Each Sabbath, when with the devout
I sit in church to think and pray,
My eyes, that fain would rove about
O'er all the scene in wanton way,
I hold, with resolute command,
On objects grouping near at hand.
There, just before me, without fail,
Where the long sunbeams brightest fall,
Sits a fair lady, tall and pale,
Enveloped in a Paisley shawl,
Of that old style that never swerves
From blended tints in palm-leaf curves.
And while the preacher talks with force
Of faith and life, of death and sin,
Along each figure's winding course
My eyes go glancing out and in,
Till every line above the pew
Is linked with doctrines old and new.

And every shade of color brings
Some truth or principle to mind,
Some picture fair of heavenly things,
Or peaceful thoughts of soothing kind;
And hope and love, and virtues all,
Run riot o'er that Paisley shawl.

Oh, lady with the quiet face,
Sitting serenely in your pew!
Folding your garment to its place,
You see not half that meets my view;
Nor know how it has come to be
Prayer-book and rosary to me!

FROSTY.

'Tis silent night. The moon is bright,
Flooding the snow-clad earth with light.
Their shell-shaped sleigh with robes is gay,
Like creamy foam in disarray.
Their milk-white steed, from curbing freed,
Flies o'er the road with magic speed.
And all the time, in tinkling rhyme,
The sleigh-bells ring a dainty chime;
Now soft and low, with even flow,
As o'er the level land they go;

Now quicker bound sends dashing round
A sudden gush of silvery sound.
O'er brow and cheek, in wanton freak,
The ice-imps play at hide-and-seek;
And bring a glow like rose's blow
To her fair face, erst white as snow.
On hair and lash ice-crystals flash,
And turn to white his brown moustache.
Oh, far and wide on every side
The snow views broaden as they glide.
No wayside light comes to their sight,
The world seems wrapped in dreams of night.
Through vale, o'er steep, by woodlands deep,
Where shadows shiver in their sleep,
They ride, till they seem cast away
From life and sound in that small sleigh.
And all the time their voices chime
In merry tune with sleigh-bells' rhyme.
Oh, soon, too soon the sinking moon
Tells that the night is near its noon.
And back to town they ride adown
Between the houses white and brown,
Till there before her father's door
They join the living world once more,
Their chilly bliss — is it amiss? —
All ending in a frozen kiss.
Each town-clock tells, in sinks and swells,
The tattling tale with clanging bells.

WAIT.

If, as is thought, the soul outlives
This body, which we know must die;
If Death's is the kind hand that gives
Freedom from every clogging tie,
And after that, the earth, the air,
Ay, all the universe is ours,
And we may wander everywhere,
Unchecked, forgetting miles and hours,—
What matters it though now our feet
Must tread a weary, beaten way,
Or that our longing eyes must meet
The self-same visions day by day?
Wait! Earth is broad, and heaven is high,
But we can see all by-and-by.

IN A HAMMOCK.

Swing high, swing low, with motion slow,
A leafy arch above me spread;
Long threads of sunlight come and go,
Chasing the shadows to and fro
Along my skirts with airy tread;
Across my face the zephyrs blow,
Tossing my hair; while soft and low
A linnet warbles overhead.

Swing high, swing low. A maiden's song
In drowsy snatches comes and goes.
O robin, hush ! your voice is strong ;
Its weary click-clack is no song,—
Then bring it swiftly to a close !
The honey bees — a busy throng —
Among the blossoms drone along ;
They'll swiftly lull me to repose.

Swing high, swing low. I'm in a boat ;
I'm drifting, drifting out to sea.
Bird-songs and bees seem far remote ;
The waters ripple as I float ;
The landscape fades and slips from me.
The black-backed gull, with snowy throat,
Sends out its loud, resounding note —
I'm slowly drifting out to sea !

Swing high, swing low. Oh, let me glide
Forever in this aimless way !
Beyond the realm of time and tide,
Beyond the ills that aye abide
With dwellers in these walls of clay,
O'er unknown seas expanding wide,
To lands unknown, oh, let me glide —
From toil and care away, away !

MY ORIOLES.

Look just beyond the low, red gate
That opens to the meadow field!
See that tall elm, so firm and straight,
Its rough, brown trunk by vines concealed;
Its drooping branches toss and sway
Each time a zephyr moves that way.

Oh, such a dainty wild-birds' nest
Is hidden in that mass of green!
I watched its building while at rest
Within the shade—myself unseen;
Or, if they saw, they showed no fear.
Perhaps they knew a friend was near.

It took them long to choose a place.
They went and came a hundred times,
Flashing their gold before my face,
And talking on in droll bird rhymes.
I almost knew what 'twas about,
So round and full each word came out.

And when, at last, the work begun—
Oh, such a busy, jolly pair!—
They both seemed running o'er with fun,
And-filled with songs the summer air.
Not long, clear trills, but bursts of glee,
That bubbled up and would go free.

With bills half full of sticks and strings,
I've seen them try to keep the song —
Oh, little harlequins with wings! —
And drop the music all along.
They cracked their jokes and laughed, I know,
At us, poor plodders, here below.
Oh, what a gallant husband he,
When duties would not let her roam!
He gayly searched each bush and tree
For dainty bits to carry home.
And all bird-gossip he could win
He brought, with comments well mixed in.
No wandering bird dared come a-near,
So fiercely would it be assailed;
And did a cat or dog appear,
With angry threatenings it was hailed.
Not e'en a chicken dared to stray
Where that tree's shadow stretched away.
They're quiet now, — my little birds, —
And scarcely sing one song a day.
They've found that life is deeds, not words,
And work leaves little time for play.
But spring will come once more, and then
I know they'll find their songs again.

IT SNOWS.

Down, down, with motion soft and slow,
All day the silent snow has fluttered;
All day the north wind, sad and low,
In fitful strains its plaint has uttered.

The walks are covered ankle deep;
Each gate-post wears a bridal bonnet;
The sombre cedar seems to sleep
Beneath the spread that grows upon it.

The lonely maples stand forlorn,
Their naked branches all a-quiver;
And lowly shrubs, that fringed the lawn,
Behind the fences crouch and shiver.

Some garden stalks stand straight and tall,
To summer memories appealing,
While clumps of weeds, along the wall,
Our summer sins are still revealing.

The sleigh-bells have a muffled tone,
And horses' feet send snow clouds flying;
Each shambling passer walks alone,
With head low bent, the storm defying.

Here in our fortress, warm and snug,
Tab, you and I will stay together;
You purr, contented on the rug;
I muse, nor care for stormy weather.

Our lives are made of sun and shade ;
We bask in sunshine when 'tis offered ;
And when the darksome clouds invade
We make the most of what is proffered.

IN THE WOODS.

Here on the soft, brown leaves I lie,
Deep in the woodland shade ;
No bit of landscape meets my eye,
Nor one blue gleam from sea or sky,
Nor glimpse of sunlit glade ;
Rough tree trunks, towering everywhere,
Hold this broad canopy in air.

Brown branches spread rare pencillings,
Keeping themselves aloof ;
And each small leaf, that lightly swings,
Its own bright bit of beauty brings
To form the dainty roof ;
And look whichever side I may,
The silent arches stretch away.

No birds! no wind! Uncertain sounds
Come faintly from afar ;
I fancy when we leave earth's bounds,
To walk no more its well-known rounds,
That thus, without a jar,
The murmurs from this old, loved land
Will echo on the heavenly strand.

How near God is! I seem to lie
Within his courts to-day;
No great white throne, exalted high,
No glittering pageant passing by,
To fill me with dismay;
He walks in quiet through the land,
Touching his works with loving hand.

This tiny vine, close at my feet,
These modest tufts of moss,
Are moulded into forms as neat,
Finished in beauty as complete,
As the tall trees that toss
Their branches in the summer gale
And stretch long shadows o'er the vale.

O spirit of the woodland shade,
You give me joy to-day!
Your beauties all my soul invade;
Your quiet on my heart is laid;
Oh, live with me, I pray!
Let me still feel your soothings when
I tread the jarring walks of men.

AT THE FAIR.

The crowd was dense, it pressed us close,
It bore us here and there;
A din of voices filled our ears
And jarred the pleasant air.
Oh, discord and confusion reigned—
This morning at the fair.

The crowd was dense, it swayed and turned,
And, ere I was aware,
A tall, dark form was at my side,
A warm breath stirred my hair;
And looking up I saw your face—
This morning at the fair.

A quick, keen look each gave to each,
Yet cold beyond compare;
No bow, no smile, no friendly word
Fell on the pulsing air.
We met, and looked, and passed along—
This morning at the fair.

One time,—was it so long ago?—
When young and debonair,
In that old village where we dwelt
Was no such loving pair
As you and I. Did'st think of it—
This morning at the fair?

You vowed no other maid but I
Your name and home should share,
I thought the world would be a waste
Without your love and care.
And yet, and yet, we met like that!—
This morning at the fair.

We made a blunder—but had time
The mischief to repair;
So you went your way—I went mine,
No more a thought to share.
Ah, me! how fresh it all came back—
This morning at the fair.

BREEZY.

She walked a mile across the snow,
The gleaming, sparkling, crispy snow;
Her fair young face was all aglow;
 Oh, the wind was blowing!
Some dry, brown leaves sped on before;
They twirled and danced and slid before;
With pause, and turn, and baffled soar,
 In the wind a-blowing.

Beyond the gate that stands ajar,
The old red gate that stands ajar,
Beyond the tilted pasture bar,
 This rosy maid was going;
Adown the slope, beside the wood,
The creaking, groaning, dismal wood,
Where stark and grim each giant stood
 In the wind a-blowing;
Along the ridge and up the hill,
The distant, breezy pasture hill,
With smooth, white top, aye calm and still,
 Though the wind was blowing;

And there she paused and looked away, —
Eager and anxious, looked away;
Where in the vale beneath her lay,
 With western windows glowing,
A little village, snug and fair,
Among the mountains nestled fair —
Its vanes a-gleaming high in air,
 And smoke, like clouds a-blowing.

She heard the chimes of striking clocks,
The cling and clang of steeple clocks,
That every mountain echo mocks,
 On the wind a-blowing;
And then a train came 'round a curve,
Puffing and panting 'round a curve,
With muffled roll and graceful swerve,
 Through the valley going.

She waved her scarf above her head;
Flag-like it fluttered o'er her head,
 A narrow strip of gleaming red,
 In the wind a-blowing;
The while she looked — but all in vain —
From car to car, 'twas all in vain;
No signal answered from the train
 Through the valley going.

She turned away with heart like lead;
Her buoyant spirits sank like lead;
“Ah, me, the dismal day!” she said.

 “ How the wind is blowing!”
And back across the field of snow,
The chilling, blinding waste of snow,
She slowly walked, with head bent low,
 No backward look bestowing.

Look, where the brook road winds along,
Through the long valley winds along,
A tall youth strides, humming a song,
 Against the wind a-blowing.
He leaps the wall; he climbs the hill;

With quick, firm steps he climbs the hill;
Then on and on beyond until,
 He sees the maiden going.

He hurries on; he's close behind;
His steps are sounding close behind;
She hears them not for still the wind,
 Is blowing, ever blowing.

He's at her side; he folds her in;
In close embrace he folds her in;
His kisses rain on lip and chin,
 And on her brown hair flowing.

Oh, such a look of quick surprise!
A radiant look of glad surprise,
Goes up and dances in her eyes,
 And sets her face a-glowing!
Oh, homeward walk across the snow!
The flashing, diamond-studded snow;
Oh, happy, happy day, although
 The wind is still a-blowing!

AFTER THE LECTURE.

The lecture's done. Still wrapped in dreams
Of sunny countries far away,
The pushing crowd about us seems
 More shadowy and far than they,
Till up the stairway from the street
Winter's cold thrills our senses greet.

The air is full of falling snow,
That powders the outpouring crowd;
Faces, uplooking from below,
Grow fairer 'neath the fluffy cloud,
And muffled forms, grotesquely white,
Move slowly onward through the night.

Some careless words sound sharp and clear;
Low trills of laughter come and go;
Far off, a whistled strain we hear
From some old song we used to know;
Then all is silent save the sound
Of footsteps on the snowy ground.

Now here, now there, through branching ways,
The straggling groups are lost to sight;
The empty street enchants our gaze,
Transfigured in the dancing light;
Each falling flake becomes a gem;
We walk on diamonds through the realm.

The houses loom up grand and tall,
A-glitter with reflected charms,
And white-robed trees spread over all
A canopy of giant arms;
While the uncertain distance seems
Alive with glints and mystic gleams.

'Mid all the views the artist flashed
Before our waiting eyes to-night,
With foreign lights and shadows dashed,
Charming our half-bewildered sight,
What did we see so strangely fair
As this scene in the winter air?

IT RAINS.

A sound of drops that rush and crowd,
A tinkling on the pane,
A dancing hubbub in the pools—
Oh, ho, the autumn rain!

The earth gives out a low, glad sound,
The sad winds pipe in vain;
They cannot bring a dismal thought,
So pleasant is the rain!

The sky is gray, the land is brown,
Each dead leaf is a stain,—
But you and I have magic arts
That brighten all the rain!

No one can come! No one can go!
Oh, sing your gayest strain!
A whole, round day of happiness,
Well guarded by the rain!

A CATCH.

Oh! brightly fair and wildly free
The brook slipped onward to the sea,
In easy curves, through channels deep,
Where shadows nodded all asleep,
And singing, singing soft and low,
The song such happy waters know.

Prone on the grass beneath the shade
The crowding alder bushes made,
With chin propped squarely in my hands,
I watched the water lap the sands,
Or plash the mosses fringing down
Between the rootlets, darkly brown.

In long-drawn swells of drowsy glee
The locust's drone came in to me,
And just above the water's flow
Black, long-legged flies skimmed to and fro;
While, 'neath the ferns, close to the brink,
A frog peered out with solemn blink.

A stump, out-pushing, made a pool
Where waters deepened, dark and cool,
And, glancing in, with half-shut eyes,
I saw my scaly, finny prize,
Just rocking in an easy way,
Like ship at anchor in a bay.

Ah, no such puny, worthless thing
As small boys seek with hook and string!
His ample sides of silver gray
Darkened and flashed in gorgeous way,
And minnows, huddling as in fear,
Viewed him with awe, nor ventured near.

Oh! lazy as a fish could be,
He swung within his mimic sea;
His fins, with idle flap and flip,
Moved with each forward, backward dip,
Till slowly, slowly, he and I
Were caught by the same lullaby.

Now oftentimes, when slumbers flee,
I call the "drowsy god" to me
By thinking on that rural scene;
The brook's low song, the restful green,
And that fair fish, with changeless sway,
Can lull me in this far-off day.

Not catch him! Ah, my sceptics dear,
I've had him safe for many a year,
And he is mine to have and hold,
With things that brighten growing old.
And surely, now, with vowel chimes,
I've doubly caught him in my rhymes.

SALTING THE CATTLE.

"John! John!" I cried, for I espied the rover.

"Where are you going, John? May I go, too?"

Your voice came faintly up across the clover—

"To salt the cattle. Yes." Away I flew

Down the dark lane, beneath the drooping larches,

You waiting for me just beyond the corn,

That opened in long lengths of gleaming arches,

And led me out into the dewy morn.

Then we sped on. Did our feet touch the grasses?

Or did we glide as sometimes comes in dreams,

Without a motion save the thought that passes,

And wills us onward over fields and streams?

Cloud-shadows swept above the level spaces;

We sought to reach them racing down the lea,

Then turned aside to dark, green, mossy places,

Hunting for "bear's-wheat," that we linked in glee.

A brook's loud brawl called to us from the valley,

Telling of falls and pools where minnows sleep;

And fragrant spruce trees wooed us long to dally

With hoards of spicy gums packed close and deep.

A ledge, high up, flashed out a sign of treasure,

That lured us upward from the ferny glen;

We had not learned all pleasing things to measure,

And mica was as rich as silver then.

We tried to find the thrush that sang below us.
He led us through wild mazes in his flight;
But oh! what wonders did the woodland show us,
While shy, small creatures scurried from our sight.

We went so deep, the outer world was banished,
Then shut our eyes and twirled around and 'round,
Till every trace of path and home had vanished,
And we were lost in that enchanted ground.

No hint from sun or pointing shadow heeding,
We went the way we found our faces set,
Which led us out to where the herd was feeding,
And brought to mind our task neglected yet.

When, at your call, the cattle all came, lowing,
You laughed aloud to see my look of fright,
And pointed where, fearless of their pursuing,
I looked down safely from a boulder's height.

I watched the fearful mass of hornèd creatures
Surging about the base of my retreat,
And marvelled at you, as with tranquil features
You dropped the salt close at their trampling feet.

The sun had slipped behind the mountain fringes
Before we started on our homeward way,
And western skies were bright with sunset tinges.
Ah! our short task had filled the summer day!

A TRAP.

Sheltered within a leafy bower,
I watch my charmer for an hour.
 Her fingers, white as falling snow,
 Are flitting, flitting to and fro,
While sunlight filters through the bower.

I see, evolving, bud and flower.
Oh, has she not an elfin dower?
 'Tis but a common thread, I know,
 Through which her fingers come and go,
But aye it turns to bud and flower!

O witch, in an enchanted bower!
I know you hold uncanny power.
 I did but watch these flowers grow—
 And lo, my heart, in mesh of snow,
Is caught,—a prisoner in your bower.

A MOTHER SPEAKS.

The night is dark, oh, dark and drear,
And chilly autumn rains are falling;
In mournful cries, far off, I hear
The lonely night-wind's fitful calling;
But close and warm, in peaceful rest,
My babe is sleeping on my breast.

Her light breath flutters past my face;
I feel the touch of silky tresses;
One hand in mine has found a place,
I hold it close with soft caresses.
What care we for the stealthy rain,
Or moaning night-wind's dull refrain!

I move and wake; no babe is here!
My arms are clasped o'er empty space.
Nor in the little bed a-near

Do eager hands the small form trace
'Twas all a dream, except the rain
And solemn night-wind's low refrain!

I know, I know my baby lies
Far off beneath the cold, dark ground;
Unsheltered from the weeping skies
With angry winds shrieking around
My darling — o'er whose life's short way
We let no zephyrs roughly stray!

O little head, with rings of gold!
O dainty form—dimpled and white!
Was it for this I watched unfold
Charm after charm with proud delight?
Only to have them torn away—
To perish in the rain-soaked clay?
They tell me there's a shadow land—
Hidden, but closely linked with this.
There lost ones join a spirit band,
To move for aye through scenes of bliss.
I try to see—but all in vain!
My baby lies there in the rain.

COFFEE.

O little berries, round and fair!
From tiny sprout to perfect seed,
In common earth and common air
You draw the nourishment you need.
But is there not a—something more—
What is it? Let who can explain—
That enters each inviting pore
And makes a part of leaf and grain?
I take the cup your bounty brings,
The while its fragrance fills my room,
And sip, as from enchanted springs,
Exquisite drops of amber bloom.

Lo! quickly through my languid frame
Dart happy thrills of new delight,
As when a waiting pyre takes flame
And shoots aloft long tongues of light!

Dark shadows flee; bright fancies grow;
Departing care meets pleasure's train;
Thought finds her clue, and to and fro
Seeks in the maze a truth to gain.

O little berries, round and fair!
What was it that you gathered in,
That has no part in earth or air,
But seems to mind and soul akin?

TUBEROSES.

In misty green-house aisles, or gardenwalks,
In crowded halls, or in the lonely room,
Where fair tuberose, from their slender stalks,
Lade all the air with heavy, rich perfume,
My heart grows sick; my spirits sink like lead;
The scene before me slips and fades away;
A small, still room uprising in its stead,
With softened light and grief's dread, dark array.
Shrined in its midst, with folded hands at rest,
Life's work all over ere 'twas well begun,
Lies a fair girl, in snowy garments dressed,
And all the place with bud and bloom o'er-run.

Pinks, roses, lilies, blend in odorous death,
But over all the tuberose sends its wealth,
Seeming to hold the lost one by its breath,
While creeping o'er our living hearts in stealth.
O subtle blossoms! you are death's own flowers!
You have no part with love or festal hours.

AMONG THE HILLS.

Just as the sun, with smiling face,
Paused on a height, as if to trace
His travelled pathway down the blue
Ere it should vanish from his view,
We, toiling up the steep hillside,
And weary from a long day's ride,
Came to its brow, and stood to see
What the new land beyond might be.
We saw, far down beneath our feet,
A tiny village, white and neat,
Close to a lakelet's grassy brim;
And ragged mountains, darkly grim,
Save where the sunset gold was spread
Across each giant's rocky head,
Were all about; while far away
Rose higher summits, dim and gray,
And woodlands stretched long shadows down,
From gilded tops to quiet town.

So wild and steep became our ride,
We left the buggy's toppling seat,
With nearer hand our steed to guide,
With solid earth beneath our feet.
O'er grassy plot and stony bed,
That rains had washed in other days,
We sidled down, with cautious tread,
'Tween bushy walls in zig-zag ways.
And where the village pressed to meet
And clasp the lake with crescent arms,
We followed through the winding street,
That pushed between, with prudent qualms;

Then on beyond — a steady rise —
Up, up, until it seemed the skies
Must surely ope to let us through
To some enchanting, heavenly view;
While from the dusky vale below
The darkness followed, creeping slow,
Till shadowy monsters, hugely grim,
Frowned down on us; and, outlined dim,
The road ran on a little way
To hide in the uncertain gray.
We, peering on, far up the height,
At last discerned a little light,
That might have been a fire-fly's gleam,
Only it had a steady beam;
And then a house, that seemed to rest,
Like some wild eagle's crag-stayed nest,
High on the mountain's shelving side,
With chasms opening near and wide;

And all about were trees and ledge
That pushed it close up to the edge,
Or so we thought, as through the dark
We tried the strange new scene to mark.

And there, half sleeping, half awake,
Through the night hours we seemed to cling,
As fearful that some rough wind-shake
Our fragile lodge might downward fling.
And all the night the forest moaned,
Tossing its arms in wild despair,
And owl to owl sent out, deep-toned,
A weird "too-who" across the air.
A rush of water, soft and low,
From somewhere came in changeless tune,
And from the little lake below
Rose the low laughter of a loon.

But oh! the wonders of the morn!
Waking at once — as if new born —
To this strange spot, — not earth, not heaven, —
A half-way place where hints are given
Of glories that for aye await
Beyond the barring golden gate;
A fleecy sea of mist shot through
By golden beams; while from the dew,
That trembled o'er the rumpled height,
Up rose a twinkling flood of light.
And right before our raptured eyes
Old Double Head reared to the skies,
With bulgy crags, and slide-seamed side,
And caverns opening long and wide, —

Its summits lost in vapory glow,
Its base hid in the vale below;
And through the tree-lined, deep ravine,
That held its mysteries between
A dashing trout-brook onward sped,
A slipping, winding, silver thread.
We saw afar, through narrow rift,
The misty shadows float and shift,
Where an unbroken forest lay,
And far to northward stretched away;
While a strange something wrapped us 'round —
It was not sight; it was not sound;
It had no shape; it had no name;
We knew not how or whence it came;
No poet's line, no painter's tint,
Has ever caught the subtle hint;
But he who took, "with forehead bare,
The benediction of the air "
Had felt the rich, ecstatic thrills
From this wild spirit of the hills.

BLACK-BIRCH.

Are there black-birch trees a-growing in the far-off woods,
I wonder —

With a wealth of balmy essence in their branches lithe and
strong?

In the spring-time do the children reach with eager hands to
plunder,

While the quiet woodland arches ring with laugh, and shout,
and song?

I can see an old gray school-house, with a ledge and wood
beside it,

And the rumpled, mossy, pasture-land runs close up to its
door;

While, away back in the greenness, with a tuft of fern to
hide it,

And a flash like purest crystal, a spring bubbles and runs
o'er.

There's a battered tin cup hanging on a drooping bough
close by it,

Where the sunlight comes in flickers and the shadows
gather dim.

Oh, the rush of childish footsteps when at recess time they
spy it!

Oh, the plash of cooling water! oh, the warm lips at its
brim!

Then the pulling at the birches! the delightful swish and rustle!

And the crackling of the tender twigs, the noisy bursts of glee!

When the sharp rap on the window calls — oh, what a merry tussle

In the filling out of pockets so that no sharp eye may see!

The dark room grows strangely cheerful as the little smugglers gather;

And a spicy, woody fragrance penetrates its dingy nooks, Ah, how sly the rodents nibble, while they make a vain endeavor

To appear absorbed in gleaning from the wisdom of their books!

When the daily tasks are ended, and with dinner-basket swaying,

All the little folks bound homeward, and the house is left in gloom,

Then across the teacher's weary face a pleasant smile is straying—

As she brushes out the litter with her clumsy hemlock broom.

MILK-WEEDS.

Through the loose stones by the low garden wall,
Where the road curves 'round a mossy old boulder,
Soldier-like milk-weeds stand slender and tall,
Each with a tassel-bloom over its shoulder;
All facing down the way,
Marching in disarray—
Tassel-bloom epaulets over each shoulder.

Summer winds racing adown the hill-side
Set them all nodding and shaking together,
See how they march with a long, swinging stride,
Waving of pennant and tossing of feather!
Down to the sunny plain,
Hasting with might and main,
Only to slip again, backward together.

Golden-brown butterflies in the sun-glare,
Flitting and swinging, with never a rover;
Tipsy with sweetness, they brighten the air,
Dancing a fairy-dance over and over.
Dancers that trip all day,
Marchers that never stray,—
Two steps, then back again, over and over.

COMING.

O sky, summer sky, bend your clearest blue over!
O sun, shine the brightest you may!
O fields, waft abroad from your fair beds of clover
Your sweetest of perfume, I pray!
For some one is coming! Oh, some one is coming
Across the wide country to-day, yes, to-day,
And my lips run with song, all the happy day long,
For some one is coming to-day!

I've made the rooms bright with my own restless fingers;
I've decked them with blossom and spray;
The curtains are looped where the softest light lingers
To catch every zephyr astray;
For some one I love to the cottage is coming
Across the wide country to-day, yes, to-day!
And my thoughts run in rhyme to my pulse's glad time,
For some one is coming to-day!

O people afar, do you see the train hieing
Across your broad lands and away,
With thunder and rumble and smoke-clouds a-flying?
Oh, see that there is no delay!
For some one is coming—with speed one is coming
Across from the Westland to-day, yes, to-day!
And there's naught 'neath the skies like the look in the eyes
Of the one that is coming to-day!

O heart, were you dull? All your trouble is banished—
Is banished forever and aye!
O face, were you sad? All your care lines have vanished—
Joy swept every vestige away—
For some one is coming! Oh, some one is coming
Across the wide country to-day, yes, to-day!
O my heart, hush your beat! Let me hear the dear feet
Of the one that is coming to-day!

AT THE WINDOW.

Oh, is the lady carved from stone?
So statue still! so marble cold!
The window lace about her thrown
In ferny, frost-like, clinging fold.
Her small, white hands, close clasped, at rest,
With one gem gleaming like a star;
One cheek against the casement pressed,
Dark eyes firm fixed with gaze afar.
Through open doors, from parlors near,
Gay voices come in talk and song,
And rippling laughter, rich and clear,
In happy gusts is borne along.
Outside, the North Wind, piping high,
Has called his wintry dancers out—
A countless host, aye rushing by,
With whirl and twirl in ghostly rout.

With twirl and whirl, with turn and swerve,
In snowy robes that float and trail,
Adown the hill-side's gentle curve,
Across the narrow, winding vale,
To where, on shadeless ridge of snow,
The setting sun's last rays expire,
Flooding the height with silvery glow,
Tipping a marble shaft with fire.
'Tis there the revel seems to end,
As if with sudden awe oppressed ;
All, creeping low, in white clouds blend,
And there the maiden's sad eyes rest.

OLD FARMER T.

Old Farmer T. is short and stout,
With form bent low from age and toil,
'Neath slouchy hat his face looks out,
Wid-jawed and dingy as the soil.
He wears a blouse of faded blue,
With baggy trousers, dirty brown,
And every day, with much ado,
He drives his cows across the town :
"Terrup! What ye 'bout *there!* G'long
Why don't ye g'long!"

His old red horse is lame and thin,
And jogs with nose close to the ground;
His springless cart, with rattling din,
Proclaims his coming all around.
He always wears an ugly scowl,
That gathers deeper day by day;
His voice is low with rolling growl,
Like muttering thunder far away:
“Terrup! What ye ’bout *there!* G’long!
Why don’t ye g’long!”

At sunny morn, when birds awake,
And all the land is fair and sweet,
He comes, our choicest dreams to break,
And darkens all the village street.
His cows go racing here and there,
The leader clangs her clumsy bell;
He follows, trailing on the air,
His burden without sink or swell —
“Terrup! What ye ’bout *there!* G’long!
Why don’t ye g’long!”

When evening comes, and tasks are done,
And happy children shout and play,
When restful thoughts all homeward run,
And cares drop off and slip away,
The farmer then drives home again,
His patient cows browsing before;
He speaks to neither boys nor men,
But growls and mumbles o’er and o’er —
“Terrup! What ye ’bout *there!* G’long!
Why don’t ye g’long!”

Aught of his life I cannot tell,
Nor what his plans and hopes may be,
Nor of the souls fate dooms to dwell
With him beneath the same roof-tree.
I only know I pity all
Whose lines cross his in any way;
Even the brutes that hear his call
In changeless accents every day—
“Terrup! What ye ’bout *there!* G’long!
Why don’t ye g’long!”

DESPATCHES.

(*To his Friend.*)

My bride to be is waiting me;
Ah, soon her wealth I’ll share!
But once, meanwhile, I’ll win a smile,
From my old love in Ayer.

(*To his Love.*)

Dear little dove! My life! My love!
From all this fret and care
I’ll hie away to spend a day
With your sweet self in Ayer.

(*To his Affianced.*)

O cruel fate! ’Tis hard to wait,
But we delays must bear,
I’d fly to you, but business new
Bids me go ’round by Ayer.

(From his Love.)

What's this I read! "Your love!" Indeed!
Oh, false beyond compare!
Ne'er let your face again disgrace
The goodly town of Ayer.

(From his Affianced.)

"Delay!" and "fate!" Ah, you're too late!
I no man's love will share!
Go back the way you came to-day,
Or stop for aye in Ayer.

A FLURRY.

We leave the mountain wilds behind,
Still with their mysteries oppressed,
And ride through open lands to find
Dark storm-clouds massing in the west.

They hurry up the summer sky
To glower down with threatenings dire;
On, on before, our good steeds fly,
But far off seems the home church spire.

The flying swallows skim the ground;
The thunder growls in long, low peals;
And from the woods a rushing sound
Blends with the clang of hoof and wheels.

We clatter down the rough hill-side;
We rumble through the dark'ning vale;
'Neath sheltering trees the white flocks hide;
The lone trees bow before the gale.

The blinding dust-clouds whirl and twirl,
And, mixed with dead leaves, fill the air;
Our wind-caught robes like sails unfurl,
And spinning hats leave flying hair.

The shaking bridges creak and spring;
The jostled pebbles roll and skip;
We round the curve with sudden swing;
The first drops splash on cheek and lip.

On, on! Ah, here's the church once more,
With its long, friendly open shed!
We dash beneath just as the roar
Of pouring floods bursts overhead.

From our retreat we watch the rain
Down-rushing from the lonely church,
And see the frantic weather-vane
Turn wildly on its lofty perch.

The thunder booms, the lightnings cast
A ghastly flicker o'er the scene,
The forests wrinkle 'neath the blast
Like grassy fields of tender green.

'Tis still again! No wind! No rain!
The fading clouds reveal the blue,
And where the woodland meets the plain
A rift of sunlight shimmers through.

'Neath dripping trees, with sober pace,
We spatter home at close of day,
While Nature's shining, fresh-cleaned face
Flashes new beauty all the way.

RIGHT ANGLES.

Close to the sidewalk, just over the way,—
Only a lilac hedge creeping between,—
Low down and firm, as if always to stay,
Stands a wide house with a background of green.
Each of its sides is a twin to its brother—
No line on one but is matched by the other.

No hint of portico, cornice, or wing
Breaks the dull plain of its white-painted walls;
Only green blinds that we never see swing,
Only a door where the knocker ne'er falls.
One granite square, for a step, lying under,
Pushing the lilac hedge widely asunder.

Like a green mat with no wavering line,
This way and that, to the east and the west,
Stretches the yard, and a Normandy pine,
Holding it smooth, on each corner is pressed.
Bushes of currants crowd close for a border;
Apple-trees stand in the nicest of order.

Drawn up before it, like soldiers on drill,
Pointing their bayonets straight to the sky,
Lombardy poplars stand solemn and still,
Frowning down grimly on each passer-by ;
Day in and day out, in ceaseless endeavor,
Warding off Time and his changes forever.

Once every week, when the Sabbath bells ring,
Sending their last solemn summons to prayer,
Slow on its hinges we see the door swing,
Letting two ancient dames out to the air.
Perfectly mated, oh, slender and stately —
'Mid fashion's butterflies walking sedately.

Bonnets tied evenly under each chin,
Shawls folded squarely and fastened in place ;
Hands, over hymn-books, crossed meekly and prim ;
Hair smoothly parted away from each face ;
Frigid blue eyes, by no love-light invaded —
Love-light and joy-light all banished or faded.

Over their threshold I never may look,
But all its keepings are clear to my mind :
No curtained alcove or soft restful nook —
All hard and true, as if levelled and lined.
Oh, for some tumult to sweep o'er their border,
Showing them once the wild glee of disorder !

IN THE NIGHT.

Are there faint footsteps outside in the night?

Is there low sobbing at window and door?

Lost and forsaken ones seeking the light,

Sighing in lonesomeness for what is no more?

No, 'tis the rain with a strange, ghostly fall;

Night-winds that moan like a lost spirit's call.

Is that a drum with a dull, muffled beat,

Like a heart throbbing in terror or dread?

Are there forms moving with slow, timing feet,

Dancing a death-dance by yonder low bed?

No, 'tis the clock, marking time as it crawls;

Wind-shaken shadows on dim-lighted walls.

Friend that I love,—oh, so still and so white!

What! from the lips not a flutter of breath?

Oh, has she gone in the dark, dreary night?

Am I alone in this chamber with Death?

No; faintest thrills through the veiled eyelids creep;

'Tis but the lull of an opiate sleep.

Under the curtains I peer through the dark;

Only the room's gloomy double I see,

With its one sleeper, so silent and stark,

And my own face staring blankly at me.

Blackest of darkness is spread over all,

Wrapping the land in funereal pall.

Moans, moans the night-wind and sobs, sobs the rain.

Will the long night with its burdens go past?

Will my heart dance in its lightness again,

And the world waken to motion at last?

Oh, for a sound in the wide, dismal house,

Though but the squeak of a scared wainscot mouse!

Death here beside me is watching to-night,

Watching and waiting to swell his vast train;

Formless and voiceless, but dreadful in might,

Holding my heart with a cold, noisome chain.

Helpless and hopeless, I watch in the gloom,

Waiting the slow-coming, sure-coming doom.

OPINIONS.

Inside a window, by a public way,

A little diamond lay exposed to view.

Its rays were small, but all its light was true.

Few saw it as they hurried by that day.

One, looking, cried: "O what a brilliant gem!

No fairer one is there in all the land!

See how it flashes out on every hand!

'Tis fit to deck a royal diadem!"

"A gem, no doubt," another said, "but small,

And roughly cut. Its setting, too, is poor.

Then see where it is kept — a third-class store!

Don't look at it! It cannot please at all."

“Mere paste!” a third remarked, with careless glance.

“The world is full of such. Their mocking glare
Meets us on every hand. Diamonds are rare.
To think all true displays great ignorance.”

“How lovely!” said a fourth. “What may this be?

I am not wise in gem and treasure lore.

This may be true or false. I know no more
Than that it is a pleasant thing to see.”

The little diamond, with a steady light,
Beamed from its cushion all that sunny day.
No bitter comment dimmed a single ray;
No flattering words brought out a gleam more bright.

O heart of mine! — I said — can you not read
A needed lesson, though in senseless stone?
Leap not at praise; sink not at censure’s tone:
Words cannot change your worth. Why give them heed?

A HAMMOCK.

Beneath the trees, close by the cottage door,
Where, through the grass, a well-worn path is made,
A canvas, boat-shaped hammock, darkened o’er
By time and use, hangs idly in the shade.

Tom Paine, the yellow cat, lies fast asleep
Within its depths, as if his work all done,
While o’er his scarred old head the shadows creep,
Lives o’er, in dreams, his battles lost and won.

Not long his rest, for soon, with joyous shout,
A boy and girl come bounding o'er the green,
And Tom, his sleep and visions put to rout,
Moves slowly off with ruffled fur and mien.

"Let's play we're at the beach, and this a boat!"
Cries Georgie, flourishing impromptu oar.
"Come, May, climb in, and we'll soon be afloat;
We'll sail and fish along this rocky shore!"

I hear much talk of fishes, lines, and nets,
And then a fearful storm there seems to be,
And, looking out, I see the boat upset,
And they are floundering in the grassy sea.

When all is righted there comes sailing by
A Russian ship with apron banners gay,
While booming corn-broom guns make havoc fly
Among the frightened Turks along the way.

Soon peaceful May grows sick of guns and fight;
And now into a carriage turns the swing,
While George, his prancing horses holding tight,
Calls at the summer-house with startling ring.

And May, with fingers stiff in fancied gloves,
And neatly holding up imagined train,
Steps lightly out the way a belle approves,
And climbing in, the steeds speed off again.

Faintly, from down the street, there comes the sound
Of "Bonnie Charlie," by street minstrels played;
The children clear the hammock at a bound,
And once again 'tis idle in the shade.

DEAD ?

You say our friend is dead ; and yet we see
The work of her deft fingers all about.
The happy words she penned for you and me —
We read them now ; no line has faded out.

And memory holds her in such close embrace
Her graceful form is present with us still ;
We note the changing light on her dear face,
And her low voice has yet a power to thrill.

Life is not just to breathe, to sleep and wake,
Be grave and gay through certain lengths of years ;
And, as we come and go, to give and take
Naught to or from the world but smiles and tears.

We put ourselves into our work and thought,
And he lives longest who toils most and best,
For works live on while the frail hands that wrought
Are cold and still in their last changeless rest.

When earth and air no longer hold her form,
When every vestige of her life has fled,
When no heart beats that kept her memory warm,
Oh, not till then will our loved friend be dead !

RESTING.

The morn was fair, with Sabbath calm,
And nature's charms were all revealed;
I took a book beneath my arm
And wandered off across the field.

The shadows lay as if asleep;
My own moved vaguely, like a dream;
It went before me up the steep,
Then down across the pasture's green,

And on, and on, till not a trace
Of human habitation lay
Wherever I might turn my face,
Save on a hill-side far away.

An ash tree spread its branches wide
Half way adown a grassy hill;
Two roots uptwisting at its side
Formed an arm-chair a queen might fill.

I took the seat. Close down below,
'Mid crowded ranks of forest trees,
I heard a brooklet's noisy flow,
And saw its gleam between the leaves.

I read of scenes in sunny climes,
Far off beyond the rolling main;
While this and that with pleasant chimes
Seemed strangely blended in my brain.

Sometimes across the placid sky,
Above the pages of my book,
A hawk or crow went sailing by,
Drawing my half-reluctant look.

A bobolink came now and then
To flout me with his roundelay,
Bewildered bees once and again
Droned at my ear, then sped away.

Complacent cattle came and went,
Cropping the grass with pleasant sound;
Suspicious sheep a wild look bent,
Then hurried off with nervous bound.

I left my castle once, — to dine, —
Went just beyond the little glen,
Where strawberries grew large and fine,
Then took my place and read again.

And so the day sank as it rose —
A perfect day of perfect rest;
The sun seemed loath to bid it close,
Propping his round chin in the west.

Then twilight came with added calm,
And night birds sang from nooks concealed;
I took my book beneath my arm
And sauntered home across the field.

THE WOOD THRUSH.

When, in the pleasant summer days,
I walk through quiet, leafy ways,
From out the woodland, sweet and clear,
A wild-bird's song comes to my ear.
Flute-like and liquid in its tone,
It has a cadence all its own;
And yet, so plaintive is the strain,
A loneliness, akin to pain,
Steals o'er the heart, and fancy brings
Pictures of solitary things :
Of human hearts estranged and lone,
Of loves that live and die unknown,
Of earnest prayers pleading to heaven
That sin-stained souls may be forgiven,
Of lonely isles in distant seas,
Of waveless lakes 'mong forest trees,
Of pale-faced nuns and convent bells,
And hooded monks in cloistered cells.
O little bird, does sad unrest
Send those wild throbbings from your breast?
Do sun, and stream, and woodland bower
Ne'er cheer you with their magic power?
Does no glad trill or cheerful note
Stir the soft plumage of your throat?
I know you mate and build each year
Your tiny nest and fledglings rear;
You gather food and drink each day,
And pass the time in true bird way;
But never thus you seem to me :
Naught but a sad, lone bird I see.

MY FERNERY.

You see a tuft of ferns, a bed of mosses,
And woodsy plants of dainty shape and shade ;
A bright October day my vision crosses,
Its golden light a-glint on wood and glade.

Pushing our way where alder bushes, dipping,
Marked where the brooklet in the valley lay,
We found this dark green moss, all wet and dripping,
Close to its brink, fringing its winding way.

Beside a pond, deep among meadow grasses,
These pitcher-plants grew rank, full to the brim
With water, clear as ever filled the glasses
Bepraised by temperance bards in song and hymn.

These trim-stemmed cranberries, among them growing,
Tinged with their purple all the meadow's green,
While every breeze, across its level blowing,
Brought out new hues in many a fitful gleam.

This graceful fern — we saw its green plumes tossing
On a small island, close up to the shore.
With careful step, o'er shaky log bridge crossing,
We won the prize, and joined it to our store.

Beneath tall trees, — our eager footsteps crushing
The yellow leaves that covered all the ground, —
After long search, among the bright leaves brushing,
These mottled bits of adder's tongue were found.

Arbutus leaves, through which shy blooms are peeping,
And partridge vines, with berries large and gay,
And countless things up through the mosses creeping,
All bring to mind that bright October day.

Jack-in-the-pulpit, — oh, the handsome preacher!
We never saw his home, yet all the same
His glossy suit and each expressive feature
Speak of the sheltered dell from which he came.

Yes, they are fair; and yet I'm half inclining
To fancy that they wear a homesick look;
That, like caged wild birds, they are ever pining
For their old homes by woodland, field, and brook.

“ROSY MORN.”

When the night is on the wane,
And the stars begin to fade,
When a tint of dawn again
On the eastern sky is laid,
When the earth in dews is steeping,
And the cricket sinks his strain,
When a coolness o'er us creeping
Lulls to rest the weary brain,
Then the ice-cart's thunderous sound
Wakens all the echoes 'round,
And the driver's clanking feet
Thump along the quiet street;
Torturous ice-tongs clang and clatter,
Ice-cakes drop with thud and shatter
In the “rosy morn.”

Day-light glimmers on the wall
When these sounds grow faint and far ;
Silence settles over all,
Save that far-off rumbling car.
Once more sleep comes sweetly wooing,
Banished dreams steal softly back,
All their pleasant scenes renewing ;
Care forsakes her deep-grooved track ;
Then through windows open near,
Sounds of tumult reach the ear ;
Yawls and barks the welkin rend,
Cats and dogs their discords blend,
Dreams and fancies all go flying,
Hopes of sleep are dead or dying
In the "rosy morn."

On the tin roof overhead
Doves are trampling to and fro
With a stately, martial tread,
And a "coo-coo," soft and low ;
Robins fret, and sparrows twitter,
Pet canaries pipe and trill,
Chanticleer, with plumes a-glitter,
Tries his best each pause to fill ;
Now our more industrious neighbor
Shames us with his sounds of labor ;
Workmen tramp, and tradesmen rattle,
Housemaids sweep the walks and tattle,
Small bells clingle, milk-cans jingle, —
Oh, the sounds that rise and mingle
In the "rosy morn!"

A MOUNTAIN PASTURE.

We rode for miles where pleasant farms
In rumbled greenness bound the way;
Where in October's thousand charms
The many tinted woodlands lay;

Where orchard slopes were carpeted
With shining rounds of red and gold,
And shaking branches overhead
The gleaner's hidden presence told;

Where pumpkins gleamed amid the corn,
That stood at half-mast in the fields,
And turkeys sought, with looks forlorn,
The hopping tribes that autumn yields;

Where apples hung in loops to dry,
Or browned themselves on snowy spreads,
And tipsy squashes leaned awry
In mottled heaps 'neath sunny sheds;

And then the road grew steep apace;
We zig-zagged up the ledgy height,
While backward looks were turned to trace
The widening view, in shifting light.

The pines gave out a balmy smell,
And spicy hints of frost-nipped ferns
From every bushy, wayside dell
Came wafting up at sudden turns.

The path grew rougher all the time;
We left the hubbly public way,
Up pasture rocks and steeps to climb,
Till all the land beneath us lay:

Green fields with patches placed askew,
Crossed off by many a random wall,
With strips of forest rambling through,
And flitting shadows over all.

Small ponds in sheltered vales reposed,
Streams curved away through shadows dim,
And where the eastern vision closed
The ocean showed a slender rim.

A cow-bell clangled close at hand,
A blue-jay scolded just below,
And lazily across the land
Went sailing by a cawing crow.

The horses neighed, their manes outshook,
And followed us with startled eyes;
With horned heads lifted high to look,
The cattle gazed in mild surprise.

The spangled junipers outspread,
Turning our eager steps aside;
And loose stones tilted 'neath our tread,
While romping winds our arts defied.

The district schools, as we came down,
Were dining in the open air,
Like basket picnickers from town,
Making bright pictures unaware.

SHUT IN.

From the upper shelf, as I just now fumbled
'Mong the ancient books that it holds in trust,
By a careless move this old Reader tumbled,
With its leaves wide spread, and a puff of dust.

And out from between its yellow old pages
Something went scattering over the floor,
With a smell, I thought, like the "dust of ages,"
And a look like grass when summer is o'er.

Oh, what did I see as I stooped to gather
The crumbling leaves to their places again?
Two gayest of girls, in the pleasant weather,
Walking and talking in merriest strain;

Through the dark green rowen, our shade hats trailing,
While the low-down sun blazed up from the west;
A night-hawk, booming, above us was sailing,
With a golden gleam on his speckled breast.

We were talking of — what? Do you remember?
No doubt 'twas the chatter of foolish girls
Whose lives were as bright as the fair September,
Whose hearts were as light as the leaf that twirls.

With a graceful move you would oft bend over, —
As the willow dips to the river's strand, —
And I saw, each time, that a four-leaved clover
Was plucked from its place by your dainty hand.

"You're a witch!" I cried, "or a trained magician!
Not once in an age comes one to my view!"

"Can it be," you said, "a defect of vision?"

And bending down quickly you picked up two.

With the evening dew on our length'ning tresses,

We slowly went home, while the air grew chill,

And the drabby trail of our muslin dresses

Through our happy hearts sent a troubled thrill.

Did you think, as you pressed, in the lamp's dim shining,

The velvet-green leaves, with a dreamy look,

That your own fair face and that day's declining

Would stay, like the clover, in this old book?

MALAGA GRAPES.

O luscious grapes! You come to me,

From your far home beyond the sea,

Laden with riches gathered there

From fertile earth and pleasant air,

And Spanish sunshine, stowed within,

Illumes each pale, transparent skin.

I hold this cluster to the light, —

Lo, winter landscapes fade from sight!

I seem to see a city stand

Where sunny sea meets sunny land.

Fair almond blooms are everywhere,

And tropic odors fill the air.

Fruit-cumbered vines droop from each wall,
And sparkling fountains rise and fall.
I see the dark-browed gypsy girls
Spin through the dance in graceful whirls,
With flashing eyes and locks of jet,
In time to clicking castanet.
I hear the gallant's gay guitar
Tinkle through orange groves afar.
Mantilla'd maidens half conceal
Their matchless charms, and half reveal;
And dark eyes gleam with magic power
From many a leafy, latticed bower.
The muleteer, with shout and song,
Down from the mountain swings along.
By wayside shrines in sheltered nooks
The lowly kneel with reverent looks.
Alhambra spreads her wealth anew,
And proud cathedrals rise to view.
I see the dreamy mystic river —
The sheeny, winding Guadalquivir.
O land of romance, love, and song, —
Fair Spain! Your scenes my fancy throng!
Do crime and sin your joys impair?
Among my pictures they've no share.
Only bright things you bring to me,
O luscious fruit from o'er the sea!

LILACS.

A-near the school-house where I learned to spell,
Just up the hill, and on a little way,
There stood a house where sunbeams brightest fell,—
Or so I fancied, —and made longest stay.

Time-stained and old, with moss-besprinkled roof,
And green things crowding close on every side,
Lombardy poplars watching it aloof,
Hugging themselves as with ancestral pride.

It squarely faced the sunny south, and turned
Sharp angles to the public way near by,
As some wise people, having once discerned
The truth and light, will custom's ways defy.

Tall lilac bushes grew each side the door,
So tall they reached above the drooping eaves;
And thick along the wall were many more,
With wealth of bloom and satin sheen of leaves.

I looked across the yard with hungry eyes,
One dewy morn when walking all alone,
And thought—what bliss if I could gain the prize
Of one fair branch, and call it all my own!

Up through the garden walk, with footsteps light,
A lady came, in Quaker garments dressed;
With smooth gray hair beneath a cap snow-white,
A spotless kerchief pinned across her breast.

"What does thee want?" she said. Her voice was low,
And fell like music on my childish ear,
While the sweet smile that made each feature glow
Won all my heart, and banished every fear.

She filled my hands with blooms. I watched her face,
Wond'ring if angels wore that kind of look,
Till on my brain each line had left its trace,
Clear and distinct as picture in a book.

I never saw her more; but all these years,
When lilac bushes deck themselves in spring,
Framed in their purple her calm face appears,
Nor ever fails a pleasant thrill to bring.

WHAT A PITY!

They stand beside the garden gate,
Half hidden in syringa snow;
His voice comes up—a steady flow
Of softened bass; hers sweet and low,
With tender trills, like gay spring birds,
Needing no help from prosy words
Her heart's warm tumult to relate.

The sun has sunk behind the trees,
And up across the western sky
Its crimson streamers, flaming high,
Where piles of lazy cloudlets lie,
Have set the fluffy mass on fire,
Drawing all eyes up to admire;
But not one gleam this couple sees.

The swallows, leaving shade behind,
Soar up and up till each fair breast
Grows ruddy from the fiery west;
There, curving, sail in splendor drest;
Then, swooping low, in graceful swings,
We almost feel their fanning wings.
These young folks look not. Are they blind?

Her small white kitten, full of play,
Climbs up and pushes 'neath her hand
Accustomed petting to demand.
Half wond'ring at the missed caress,
Puss tangles one long silken tress,
Plays at the fringes of her dress,—
Winning no look,—then bounds away.

The shadows rise—'tis getting late—
And meet, half way, the falling light
The stars let down to cheer the night.
All things have donned a dusky hue;
The air is chill with falling dew;
Still they talk on. It must be true:
They're blind—those people at the gate!

BY THE RIVER.

A tree bends low, in humble grace,
To proffer us a double seat;
And from its restful curve we trace
The charms where wood and river meet.

There's scarce a ripple on the stream,
There's scarce a murmur at its brink;
Calmly above the white clouds dream,
Clear in its depths the shadows sink.
Now here, now there a shiner darts,
Breaking its surface into rings;
And, skimming low, a swallow parts
The gleaming brightness with its wings.
Close to the bank the minnows glide,
Where the dark alders cast their shade;
Or, startled by our steps, they hide
Within their rootlet ambushade.
Jock breaks the silence with a leap,
And swims out in the cooling tide,
Like some black monster of the deep,
Flinging off jewels from each side.
A many-shaded mass of green
Slopes upward from the farther shore,
To where, on highest bough, serene,
A grave crow looks the landscape o'er.
A sparrow trills. An unknown bird
Sends a queer, twisted strain along;
And from the quiet wood is heard
A far-off veery's lonely song.
Hark! Was not that a hum-bird's whir?
There—there! He's gone, the flitting sprite!
The lightest leaflets scarcely stir,
Though brushed and fanned by his swift flight.
The earth is glad, the sky is calm,
The flashing waters fair to see;
And yet, dear love, the day's chief charm
Is that I share its sweets with thee.

A NAME.

I glance along, in careless style,
The daily paper's newsy page, —
Though little there my thoughts engage, —
Half lost in reverie the while,
When, 'mid the wordy mass appears,
In sudden clearness 'neath my eyes,
As grave-yard ghosts are said to rise,
A name unseen for twenty years.
O name! — erst twined and wrought about
With girlish fancies, sweet and fair,
And changeful as the summer air,
With their alternate hope and doubt, —
So long, so long you've lain away
With treasured things of long ago,
'Tis passing strange for me to know
That he who wears you lives to-day;
That 'tis no dream which all this time,
From youth's wild days, has followed me, —
A pleasant, clinging memory, —
And blended with life's prose and rhyme.
I walk again, as day grows pale,
The country highway ridged with grass, —
That holds each footfall as I pass
To reach the weekly evening mail.
Once more the old red store I see,
Just round the curve, beneath the hill;
I haste across the low, worn sill,
To claim the letter waiting me.

Back through the lonely road again,
Conning my letter as I go;
The evening shadows sinking slow,
And frogs pipe shrill across the fen.

I read it twice, I read it thrice,
While loud and shrill the whip-poor-wills
Call out the echoes from the hills,
As if my notice to entice.

Too dark to read, I think it o'er,
While dusk-changed bushes crowd about,
Each with long, beggar-arms stretched out,
Seeming my treasure to implore.

O memory, one sentence give,—
One little line,— that I may know
Why those old letters charmed me so,
And, though in ashes, still will live!

O memory, as now I trace
These visions on your distant wall,
Will you not listen to my call
And picture me a form and face?

'Tis vain — the earnest, eager quest;
I see a vine-draped, empty frame!
Ah me, I cherish but a name!
That youthful fancy did the rest.

HIDDEN.

The earth is brown, and dull, and old,
Quite mottled with the dingy snow;
And tear-like waters, dark and cold,
Gather more darkness as they flow.
The naked trees, all black and grim,
Tossed by the March wind to and fro,
Seem sobbing out a dirge-like hymn,
Heavy with its refrain of woe.
And yet, beneath this seeming death
We know that life in vigor dwells;
That thrifty roots but wait the breath
And touch of spring to burst their cells,
To clothe with verdure all the earth,
To deck anew the waiting trees,
While buds and blossoms, creeping forth,
Scatter their sweets on every breeze.
In human hearts, where we can trace
Naught but is selfish, hard, and cold,
There may be folded germs of grace
The warmth of love may yet unfold;
There may be folded germs of grace
That, growing, fill the heart with joy,
Draw out new beauties in the face,
And countless ills of life destroy.
Frail human love has wondrous power
To make these hidden virtues shine;
But, oh, the marvels of that hour
When basking in the Love Divine!

TRESPASSERS.

A large, white house, with close-shut blinds,
A wide, deep yard, by trees o'ergrown,
Where singing birds and flitting winds
Through all the summer strayed alone, —
Though busy life was all around,
This spot sent forth no human sound.

Two school-girls from their windows nigh
Looked down upon the quiet place;
They watched change after change go by
In shade and blossom's random grace,
And longed to step within the bounds
The high fence marked about the grounds.

Another charm of red and gold
September added to the rest;
And, tempted sore, like Eve of old,
They watched the pear tree's brightening crest,
Or, in the calm, when day was done,
Heard apples falling, one by one.

Just how it came they never knew,
But, looking out, one sunny day
They saw a passage opened through
To where the wished-for Eden lay.
With hearts that beat in glad rebound
They crept to the enchanted ground.

Oh, knee-deep grass! Oh, blossoms gay!
Oh, golden sunlight over all!
The sky—so blue and far away—
Was brighter than outside the wall!
The cricket's trill! the bird's "dee dee"!
Oh, everything was glad and free!

One tree whose branches touched the ground,
Borne down by apples, rosy red,
Formed a fair arbor, green and round,
With shady shimmer overhead;
To that they wended day by day,
Till autumn's brightness wore away.

No one forbade them. No one seemed
To notice if they came or went;
Till, growing bold, at last they deemed
The place their own. In calm content
They revelled in its sun and shade;
On luscious fruits rare banquets made.

Quaint, airy castles rose and fell—
They planned for many a coming day,
While closed, beside them,—truth to tell,—
Their text-books all forgotten lay;
And so in memory's garnered store
They've more of joy than wisdom's lore.

Though they have oft, with contrite hearts,
Craved pardon for their trespasses,
This one among them has no part,
They let it rest just as it is;
Or rather thank the guiding power
That, in those days, brightened each hour.

MY WEALTH.

My neighbor keeps his grounds with care,
I watch their changes day by day ;
The close-clipped lawn, with here and there
A bed of buds and blossoms gay ;
While to a quiet, sheltered nook
A tidy foot-path winds away,
And at the fountain, as I look,
I see the sparkling waters play.
Toiling he spreads the picture rare ;
Idly its beauties I may share.

I know a lady, fair to see ;
'Tis joy to watch her sunny face ;
Her golden hair, eyes bright with glee ;
Her every motion full of grace.
She cannot love her beauty more,
Or quicker note an added trace,
Than I, who watch her pass my door
Resplendent in her silks and lace.
Her charms bring pleasure in their train
And cannot make me proud or vain.

A poet has a happy thought,
He moulds it into measured line —
So beautiful — he may have caught
The language of a heavenly clime.
He breathes the mystic strain aloud ;
It falls with rhythmic, soothing chime
Among the waiting, listening crowd.
Ah, now the happy thought is mine !
Its perfect music thrills my heart ;
What know I of its toilsome art ?

You thought me poor? A great mistake!
I have a share in earth's best things.
No title deeds can give or take
The bliss each coming season brings;
While health and love each brings her store
And at my feet her treasure flings —
What can a cheerful heart want more
To give it lightness while it sings?
Then there's the wealth that nothing mars —
A heritage beyond the stars.

THE WAY TO GRANDPA'S.

A well-worn path across the field —
Round barley lot and through the corn,
Here showing clearly, there concealed
By drooping grass at dewy morn!
The older people walked straight through,
But many curves our young feet knew.

Out through the barn, for just one glance
At swallows flitting to and fro,
At queer black heads, with look askance,
From out mud nests, at us below;
For just one tumble on the hay,
Then off, through back doors, on our way!

Down by the stone-heap framed around
By raspberry bushes, young and old;
Just there, beneath that rock, we found
A whole ant city in the mould!

'Twas but a step outside the way —
We'd not been there for one whole day.

Then over yonder, by the ledge,
The blueberry bush that stood alone
Seemed wooing us with offered pledge
Of berries ripe and fully grown;
And close beside, in grassy rest,
We found a tiny chip-bird's nest.

We reached the stile, — a pleasant place
Beneath a spreading maple tree, —
And there we tarried long to trace
The wayward flight of bird and bee,
Or watched the chipmunk rise and fall,
Darting a-down the pasture wall.

The pasture bars, — too wide and high
For tiny fingers to undo, —
But many crevices were nigh
Where little forms could sidle through.
Beyond — the orchard, darkly green,
While cat-tail-flags grew rank between.

The garden gate — the garden gate!
Oh, we could never pass it by!
There hollyhocks grew tall and straight
And sweet red roses charmed the eye;
There currant bushes, all aglow
With ripening fruit, were in a row.

Then, just beyond the low stone wall, —
No sweeter music e'er was known, —
We heard a brooklet's tinkling fall
Along each moss-enveloped stone.
We followed on, for well we knew
Where fragrant beds of peppermint grew !
We reached the house. A-gleam with red,
The cherry trees stood 'round the door,
And scolding robins, overhead,
Fluttered and revelled in the store,
While noisy thumps from grandma's loom
Resounded from the "open room."
'Twas long ago — oh, long ago —
That we went bounding o'er the way;
We have grown sober paced and know
Of many changes since that day,
But memory pictures all so plain
We seem to live it o'er again.

IN THE GARDEN.

Pansies, O pansies! You stand in a row,
Looking one way, as if daring a foe!
Wide-bordered caps 'round your droll faces grow.
Was it a bee or bird? Pray let me know
What angered you so.

Ha, gladiolas, your banners are gay,
Flung on the breezes in scarlet array!
Humming-birds revel among you all day,
Coming and going in glad, happy way;
 Winged blossoms are they.

Bachelor's-buttons, why will you bend over,
Linking your buds with the fragrant sweet clover?
Love-in-a-mist, are you seeking to cover
Your fair retreat from each marigold lover?
 Ah, *gold* can discover!

Poppies, my poppies! Oh, what has been done?
White as for bridals you stood, every one,
Flawless and spotless 'neath yesterday's sun.
One summer rain—and all draggled, undone,
 Your brief lives are run.

Salvia-blooms, you are flames to the eye,
Rising and falling as winds flutter by,
Brushing the mallows that stand coyly nigh,
Lifting their pink and white cups to the sky,
 Can you tell me why?

Dahlias and hollyhocks, stately and tall,
Flaunting broad blooms where the cool shadows fall;
Sweet-peas and creeper-vines climbing the wall;
Scarlet-beans twining bright lines over all.
 - Oh, the tapestried hall!

Out in the fountain the bright waters leap,
In on the breezes the low murmurs creep,
Where are the birds, that so silent they keep?
Heliotrope odors my dull senses steep,
 Is day-light asleep?

OFF!

Each winter sprite is in a fright;
I heard them talking in the night,—
Their voices, thin, piped drolly in,
Through pauses in the March wind's din,
While soft and low the melting snow
From cottage eaves drip-dropped below.

“Ho, elves and sprites that delve in snow and ice!
There's something creeping up the southern hills,
Along the air; I feel its melting thrills;
To sleep and death its lulling calls entice.
Let us away!

“I hear the sap low pulsing in the trees;
The rootlets stir uneasy in the ground;
Sounds, low and restless, come from all around,
And spring-like murmurs laden every breeze.
Let us away!

“The streams are turning in their winter beds,
Rending the sheets with which we tucked them in;
The woodpecker, with all his noisy kin,
Drums up the bugs. I see their scarlet heads.
Let us away!

“The fickle people, who oft gave their praise
To frosty marvels that our fingers wrought,
Heed us no more. Their fancies are all bought
By the soft nonsense of spring's coming fays.
Let us away!”

Then the low sound of winds around
Grew loud and fierce. All words were drowned.
With dull refrain, against the pane
The melting snow was dashed like rain.
The windows clanged, the shutters banged,
The shrieking clothes-reel whirled and whanged,—
Then all was still, while clear and shrill,
New voices came the pause to fill.

“We are off for the frozen zone!
To a country that’s all our own!
Where the snow sparkles white
’Neath the gay northern light,
And the winds have a rollicking tone!

“In that beautiful region afar,—
Right under the famed polar star,—
Where the dull Esquimau
Builds his queer hut of snow,
We will laugh out our merry Ha! ha!

“We know where the eider ducks swim,
Close up to the world’s upper brim,
Where the whales spout and play
In a wonderful way,
And the icebergs sail stately and grim,

“We’ll dance on each glittering peak,
That echoes the sea eagle’s shriek,
And the huge polar bear
We will seek in his lair,
And ride on his back for a freak.

“Oh, ho! Like the wild birds we’ll fly,
Nor breathe out one whimpering sigh.
In that land far away
For a while we will stay,
But we shall come back by and by.”

Again the sound of winds around
Grew loud and fierce. Along the ground,
With motion fleet, like dancing feet,
We heard a rushing through the street.
Then all was still and calm until
The rosy morn came o’er the hill.

IN THE ORCHARD.

Robins, oh, hush! Quit your tiresome chatter!
Why will you tell each domestic affair?
Bob-o-links, bob-o-links! What is the matter?
Are you all crazed by this winey May air?
Ho, dancing brook! racing down to the meadow,
Flashing your silver and calling to me!
Rushing, like childhood, from sunshine to shadow,
Wasting your jewels and laughing in glee!
Blossoms white! blossoms pink! tossing and swinging,
Flinging the daintiest fragrance around!
Oh, you bright blooms! Are your fairy bells ringing, —
Tolling out perfume instead of a sound?

Honey-bees, bumble-bees, plunging all over

Into the nectar! O rapturous sight!

Out from one's ravished sweet into another's,

Why don't you die of ecstatic delight?

Clouds 'neath the sky, idly floating and floating,

Pause overhead — Ah, I well can guess why —

Each lovely tint of the apple-tree's noting;

Don't seek to match them. You can't if you try.

Reading the Good Book, I learn of a heaven,

Golden and gem-decked, where good folks may stay, —

(If this is sin, may the thought be forgiven), —

Can it be fair as this orchard in May?

AN APRIL NIGHT.

With a steady, rhythmic beat,

Like a thousand fairy feet

Prancing, dancing, all in time upon the roof,

Through the livelong April night,

While the stars were out of sight,

Fell the rain-drops, keeping slumber all aloof.

I could hear the jolly rout

As they rushed a-down the spout,

Then made off with noisy splutter to the drain,

While no moment, overhead,

Ceased that tinkling, airy tread,

In the coming and the going of the rain.

With what zest the merry crew
Drummed a rollicking tattoo
On the old tin pan the boys had left in play ;
Striving each, with tiny might,
To dispel the gloom of night,
Driving visions of the midnight far away.

Once a seeming tearful sob
Set my pulses all a-throb,
And I stared, with dim forebodings, through the room ;
But a gust of misty laughter,
Breaking up the sound just after,
Bore away the dismal fancy, none too soon.

Now the even, measured flow,
Growing softer, sinking slow,
Lulls and soothes the weary tumult in my brain,
Till, half waking, half asleep,
Dream-like scenes around me creep,
Ever changing, ever blending with the rain.

Mossy banks where violets grow, —
O, I roamed there long ago, —
Bosky dells where swelling May-buds shun the sight ;
Holding close, in leafy cells,
Rosy tints and woodsy smells,
Till the gentle hands that love them bring the light.

Spreading meadows, green and low,
Where the yellow cowslips grow ;
Racing brooks that babble, babble as they glide,
Sending little jets of spray,
In their own delightful way,
Over everything that dabbles in their tide.

Now the morn comes creeping in,
And the daily cares begin,
While the baker's bells are jangling by the door.
Clouds and fancies fade away
In the steady glare of day,
And the prosy life moves onward as before.

DEAD LEAVES.

A-down the street, with loitering feet,
I walk this dull November day;
The fallen leaves lie ankle deep;
Sad winds through naked tree-tops sweep;
O'er all the land broods dark decay.
Who walks with me? Voices around
Seem speaking from the air and ground: —
“Grim death is near! The fading year
But pictures forth the fate that's thine.
All things that live and flourish here
Run through a changeful, marked career,
Then sink in sure decline.
Man's hope for future life is vain;
Nothing that dies can live again.”
“Nay. Nothing dies,” a voice replies;
“Nothing that is can cease to be;
Change follows change beneath the skies,
Old objects fall, new ones arise,
And thus the world is fair to see.
How tame would be our tarry here
Save for these changes that appear!”

“ All things must die beneath the sky ! ”

Repeats the first voice, clear and shrill.

“ As our dead bodies, by and by,

Mix with the earth in which they lie,

So our freed spirits — good and ill —

Blend with the spirit world, no more

To take the forms and hues they wore.”

“ Can mortal sight judge God aright ? ”

Another voice takes up the strain.

“ Can man, with only earth’s dim light,

Read and explain the infinite,

Making its meaning plain ?

Put vain conjectures all aside,

Trusting that He who made can guide.”

Still down the street, with loitering feet,

I walk this dull November day.

Dark, angry clouds, with motions fleet,

Above me ever part and meet,

And fierce winds check my onward way,

But glimpses of blue sky I see,

While blithely sings the chickadee.

THAT SONG.

My own dear girl ! in those bright days

When you were living close by me,

Your voice, through gay, melodious lays,

Ran like a wild bird’s, light and free.

It never had a plaintive tone ;
It never held a hint of gloom ;
It had no sound but pleasure's own,
And filled with gladness every room.

And that last song of your delight
About " the breeze that lifts your hair,"
With your firm, living form in sight,
Was like a breath of summer air.

Now, since that dark and dreadful time,
When all the light went from your face,
When you, in all your youthful prime,
Went out, and sorrow took your place,

I still can hear your voice, dear child,
Glide through the measures of that song ;
In sinks and swells, fitful and wild,
As by a light wind borne along.

It comes distinct, without a break,
Above the tumult of the day ;
And in the night each hour I wake,
But, ah, so sad and far away !

Oh, sadder than the night wind's tone
Among the lonely forest pines ;
Oh, sadder than the surf's low moan
Along the far off ocean lines.

'Tis like a pleading call of need
To which chained feet may not respond ;
While all my being bids me speed,
And sever every clinging bond.

Dear girl ! Oh, let the old song rest,
Or have it lighter movement take,
Else, by this constant strain oppressed,
Your mother's heart will surely break.

WHAT I SAID TO MY HEART.

Holiday time ! And the dearest ones dead !
Under the merciless, pitiless snow !
What is the season to us ? I said ;
Try and forget, while the weary days go, —
'Tis Christmas time.

They who have died are forever dead.
Another life ? 'Tis an idle tale,
Born in the dim, dark past, I said ;
To the thinking mind 'tis of no avail,
This Christmas time.

Myths and delusions have faded and fled ;
Science and logic have left them no place.
Why do we cherish such folly, I said,
Building up hopes on this uncertain base
Of Christmas time ?

Science and logic have left us instead —
What ? But the glare of an uncertain light, —
Flickering, shadowful, blinding, I said ;
What did you gain when you lost your delight
In Christmas time ?

Heart, foolish heart ! Would you lose every shred
Of comfort and solace this poor life can bring ?
Shut out your doubts with a strong will, I said ;
Cling, as for life, to your paling faith, cling,
This Christmas time.

AT THE LAST.

“ Be not deceived,” the sick one said,
With languid turn of pillowed head ;
“ We came from nothing into life,
To nothing go from being’s strife ;
The will that drew us from the dust
Withdraws its hold and fall we must.
This throbbing form, this thinking brain,
Will join the elements again,
And live no more save in God’s hands,
As substance for his future plans.
This shadow-land of which we hear,
Like fairy lore, delights the ear.
But no convincing proof is found,
Nor is its reason clear and sound.
Be not deceived. To die means *death* ;
All goes with this uncertain breath.”
Yet, when the parting hour was nigh,
And we with saddened hearts stood by,
There came into her fading eyes
A quick, keen look of glad surprise ;
So strong, so plain, we saw its trace
Hours after on the dead, cold face.

AS THE TIDE CAME IN.

We sat within a little boat, —

The boat was high upon the sands, —
And watched the skiffs, at anchor, float ;
And watched the stately ships, remote,
Sail out and on to distant lands ;
And far across the shining space
We watched the steamer's steady pace
As the tide came in.

Long arms of green stretched out before —

For we were in a sheltered bay.
There was no solemn, thunderous roar
Of breakers dashing on the shore,
Nor one sad hint in all the day.
The little waves, with light a-flash,
Crept up and up with rhythmic splash
As the tide came in.

The children bared their milk-white feet ;

Their bright robes flipping in the breeze ;
And, linking hands, ran out to meet,
With laugh and shout ran out to greet,
The waves that swished about their knees.
And Jack — old Jack — we smiled to see —
Laved his hot coat with canine glee
As the tide came in.

There was no blot on sea or sky,
There was no blemish on the land.
As in the happy days gone by,
For one brief hour our hearts beat high,
A-tune with Nature on the strand.
We quite forgot that care, alack !
And sorrow could come creeping back
As the tide came in.

JACK'S DOVES.

They flutter down along the walk,
They wait, expectant, on the sheds,
With step and twirl and low dove talk,
And watchful turn of gentle heads ;
But there's no sign at pane or door ;
That shrill, gay call resounds no more,
For Jack — is dead.

They circle high o'er roof and tree,
Their white wings catch the morning light,
And villagers who glance to see
Grow sad and thoughtful at the sight.
Well known as their own broods and herds
Are these, — Jack's petted, fancy birds, —
And Jack is dead.

Among the draggled, homeless flocks
That haunt the busy public way,
Their dainty plumage only mocks
Their fallen state, as day by day
They snatch the crumbs, scanty and small,
That chance or pity's hand lets fall,
Now Jack is dead.

One, looking from her dwelling-place,
Sees the bright gleam of those fair wings,
And blinding tears course down her face,
Telling the grief that vision brings.
"Oh, doves!" she cries, "Our fate is one!
What friend have we beneath the sun,
Now Jack is dead?"

She has no part with kith or kin,
She cannot join the funeral train,
Her humble lot no thought can win
From them save that of cold disdain;
And careless Jack, who loved her well,
No record left the truth to tell,
And Jack is dead.

BARNSTEAD, N. H.

[A poem read at a reunion of the sons and daughters of that town
in August, 1882.]

We talk of buried cities found beneath Italian skies,
Where homes and streets, hidden for years, from out their
ashes rise ;

The pleasant thrills that move us as their relics gather fast
Tell of a strong, magnetic link binding us to the past.

We need not cross the ocean, friends, nor wander up nor
down —

We who have come to middle life — to find a buried town.
The world is full of them to-day ; not quite so famed, we
know,

Nor covered by Vesuvian fires, so many years ago !

Only the dust that Father Time lets fall in his swift flight,—
A golden dust,—yet holding close the treasures from our
sight ;

The play-grounds of our childhood ! Oh, the homes of
earliest days !

We never more may find them, once we leave their mystic
ways !

We visit scenes we call the same, and some old trails we
find ;

But there's a marked change over all that cannot be defined.
It gathers deeper, year by year, till each return gives pain,
And memory alone can bring the old haunts back again.

And so there's much of sadness in our gathering to-day, —
For us who went out gay and young, and come back staid
 and gray ;
And, while this modern Barnstead has its own fair claims, in
 sooth,
Forgive us if *we* cherish best the old town of our youth.

Old Barnstead ! Ah, how vast it was ! It almost filled the
 world !
Not quite, — for was n't Tuttle's stage, in all its grandeur,
 whirled,
Once every week, straight through the town and off beyond
 the hills,
Where Dover lay, — a strip of land and a few noisy mills ?

That stage ! No palace car we've seen was half so rich and
 gay !
It had red curtains you could see more than a mile away ;
And, when close by Lock's Corner school, at Nutter's store,
 it paused,
What a wild stir of wonderment in our young breasts it
 caused !

We turned and stretched our necks, to peer through win-
 dows small and high,
To catch each crimson flutter in the dust clouds rolling by.
And then the school droned slowly on, while fat old bumble-
 bees
Looked in on us with husky boom, then whisked off toward
 the trees.

We followed them with longing eyes, and thought how cool
and dense

The shadows lay upon the grass beyond the pasture fence ;
And wondered if the worm we saw, at recess, on the ledge
Had finished up his jerky job of inching off its edge.

We heard a chipmunk scold and fret, and knew the very
stump

Where he was sitting, tail erect, — the frisky, saucy hump !
An August bug, with long-drawn whirl, went slowly sailing
by,

And happy swallows skimmed and wheeled between us and
the sky.

And then our eyes went slowly o'er the objects in the room ;
The pile of hemlock, by the door, ready to serve as broom ;
The oak-leaf festoons on the wall, the long seats, row by
row ;

The water-pail on the front bench, with dusty pools below ;

The battered old tin dipper, with its rusty base and brim, —
And here we made a pilgrimage in sudden thirsty whim.

Then o'er the teacher's desk we looked, with eager, search-
ing face,

Hoping, amid the knots and stains, a new scene we might
trace.

The rusty old box-stove was gay with fragrant tufts of fern,
And all the rambling funnel, in its every crook and turn,
Was misty with asparagus, where flies, in buzzy glee,
Swung up and down, so free and glad, it made us wild to
see.

Oh, how the time dragged ! Are these months so long as
first school days ?

They are the darkest points I see 'way back there in the haze.
Ah, now, when every passing hour is full to overflow,
The thinking of those taskless times is the best rest we know.

No freed wild creature from the wood e'er sped to its abode
More gladly than we bounded home through that long, wind-
ing road,

With dinner-pails that swung and flashed at every joyous
turn,

And gleaning lessons all the way that were not hard to learn.

Our father's fifty-acre farm ! How full of nooks 'twas stored !
'Twas larger than the town seems now, with regions unex-
plored.

We never saw such bees and birds as joined us at our play,
Nor fields so full of sweet wild flowers — you call them
weeds to-day.

No modern mower e'er was seen through those fair fields to
pass,

Scaring the merry bobolinks from homes deep in the grass ;
Nor one of all the clanking things that these new farms
infest

Went clattering across those vales, like demons of unrest.

A slender pathway, like a thread, now hidden and now seen,
Ran through the lines of rustling corn and off across the
green,

With mazy curves and wayside charms our young feet to
beguile,

Till, at the wall, another path met it beyond the stile.

What pleasant people came and went through those remembered ways !

There was no dearth of uncles, aunts, and cousins in those days ;

And, oh, the dear old grandparents, with hearts so warm and true !

So mindful of each childish want in all our noisy crew !

In that old town all things were bright within its ample lines,

No bugs were on the roses then, no blight upon the vines ;

And didn't berries ripen sweet through nine months of the year ?

Then — oh, the jolly harvest time, with all its added cheer !

There were no empty houses then beside the roads to rise,

Mocking us with the ghostliness of their dull, vacant eyes ;

Nor were there strange, new faces glancing from familiar nooks,

Without a hint of love for us in their cold, curious looks.

There were no grave-yards in that town of which we were aware,

Only a few old, mossy graves that always had been there,

With quaint, dark stones to tell us when the sleepers went away.

Not *one* of these cold, marble slabs that chill our hearts to-day.

Barnstead ! Her fields are rich and green, her meadows fair to see ;

Her pasture lands are dotted o'er with cattle roving free ;

Her forests spread their shadows broad in many a sylvan place ;

Her hills trail low against the sky in curving lines of grace.

On her fair ponds the lilies lie in all their wealth of bloom,
While from their banks rings out the clear, wild laughter of
 the loon ;
Her streamlets glide down grassy slopes with merry song
 and flash ;
Her waterfalls leap from their heights with frantic plunge
 and dash.

And though her sons and daughters rove through all the big,
 round earth,
A goodly company still fills the home that gave them birth ;
And younger ones are coming up to join the thinning band,
While peace and plenty, side by side, make glad the pleasant
 land.

Then here's a cheer for Barnstead town, just as she stands
 to-day ;
And here's one for her girls and boys who've never strayed
 away ;
Another for the distant ones who hold her memory dear,
And one more for the wanderers who've once more gathered
 here.
But when I speak of that old town that has so long been
 dead,
I feel like standing silently, with bowed, uncovered head.

BOW BROOK.

[A well-known stream in Concord, N. H.]

The day is hot ; no cooling breeze
Makes sound or motion in the trees ;
The birds are mute ; no bee astir ;
One humming-bird, with flit and whirl,
Sweeps down the gladiolus lines
And o'er the scarlet-runner vines,
Then off again ; the house-flies creep
Outside the screens ; puss, fast asleep,
Is stretched at length beneath the shade
The drooping lily leaves have made.
The rooms are close and cramped in space.
Longing for some wide, woodland place,
We raise our shades and saunter down
Through half the quiet, dozing town, —
A weary length of glaring street,
With scorching walks beneath our feet, —
Till the old Fair Ground's restful green
 Spreads its smooth fields before our eyes.
And, farther on, a woodsy screen
 Shows where our wished-for haven lies.
The road grows grassy ; sidewalks here
 Are winding lines through bush and brake ;
Low woodland murmurs meet the ear,
 And bird-trills from the silence wake.
We drop the bars ; we step across,
 Leaving the hateful world behind —
Its clogging thoughts of gain and loss,
 Its jar and fret of every kind.

Above us tower the fragrant pines,
Their clean leaves slip beneath our tread,
And tangled mats of partridge vines
Are bright with berries darkly red.
Rich tufts of moss are all about
On rambling root and bedded stone,
And growing things peep shyly out,
Each with a beauty all its own.
And now the land with sudden dip
Slopes to the ferny glen below ;
We hasten down, with slide and trip,
Catching a gleam where waters flow,
And soon, with rippings low and sweet,
A brook is gliding at our feet.
Around a tree, in graceful curve,
The waters make a playful swerve,
Forming an eddy, clear and deep,
Where sunbeams glance and shadows sweep.
In silvery depths the minnows swim ;
O'er its calm face bright insects skim ;
Just here, where seems a fit retreat
For fays and elves, we find a seat.
A maple's gnarled old branches spread
A shimmering canopy o'erhead ;
Its unearthed rootlets interlace
To proffer us a leaning place.
Now let the world wag as it may,
We have the best it holds to-day.
The trees' low sighs, the insects' hum,
The wood-birds' far-off timing drum,

All mingling with the brook's soft rune,
Without a break in time or tune,
Go on and on. We close our eyes,
Thinking on naught beneath the skies,
Save these unbroken waves of sound,
That seem to circle round and round,
Till we are caught and borne along,
A part of the unwritten song.
Now suddenly we are aware
Of a strange stillness in the air;
As when a choir, in sweeping rush
Of tuneful sounds that swell and blend,
Stops short, and in the awesome hush
One voice sings onward to the end.
So now the brook's lone voice is heard,
So sweet and clear we catch each word.
And do its rhyme and rhythmic flow
Seem learned from one of long ago?
Perhaps — perhaps — I cannot say —
A brook can sing no other way.

THE BROOK SINGS :

From Little Pond I started out,
Way up among the birches;
Through swampy lands I crept about,
In long and weary searches.

A trillion microscopic things
Were through and through me shooting,
And frogs stopped short in frantic springs,
To fill the bog with hooting.

And when at last I found the way
And trickled through with laughter,
A cat-bird from an alder spray
Sent jeering cat-calls after.

But, oh, the field was fair and green,
And bent its grasses over ;
And, oh, the sunbeams peeped between,
To cheer the frightened rover.

And, oh, the mosses stooped to drink,
Fringing the ragged places ;
And buttercups leaned o'er my brink
To see their yellow faces.

The snap-weeds spread their branches wide,
With all their blooms a-shaking ;
Their green leaves dipping in my tide,
A golden glimmer taking.

The water-grasses, rank on rank,
Like jolly soldiers prancing,
Went lightly up on either bank,
With airy pompons dancing.

And dragon-flies like brigadiers
Rushed up and down the borders,
With flashing mail and burnished spears,
And pantomimic orders.

Oh, many a dainty bud and bloom
Came up with shy caresses ;
I carry now the sweet perfume
Dropped from their summer dresses.

So on and on, trolling my song,
I sped, nor cared who listened,
With light sprays floating all along,
Till all my borders glistened.

And when the sound of wheels and feet
Came near me with their thunder,
Small arches spanned the busy street,
And I went singing under.

'Twas there the pee-wees built their nests,
Among rough beams and braces;
I caught a glimpse of saucy crests
Peering from hiding places.

Then all at once I rippled out
To *such* a lovely valley!
I spread my waters all about
To have a pleasant dally.

I grew so wide, I stayed so long,
I lost all thought of motion;
I quite forgot my gay old song
And all my past commotion.

My wavelets broke in dreamy way
Upon the sunny beaches;
The shadows on my margin lay
In long and lazy reaches.

The swallows swooped above my rest,
With rapid pinions flashing;
And skiffs went skimming o'er my breast,
With tiny paddles plashing.

I said, Now, I will roam no more ;
I'll be a pond forever ;
But even then I bubbled o'er,
In spite of all endeavor.

The motion brought old thrills, alack !
I burst again in laughter,
And all my waters at my back
Came gaily dancing after.

So on and on, now fast, now slow,
Through sunny field and fallow ;
I found where meadow cranberries grow,
And daisies, white and yellow ;

Where kine move slow through grasses deep,
With bells that clang and clingle ;
Then, slipping through where banks were steep,
I found this shady dingle.

But now there comes a dismal thought
To mingle with my gladness ;
Even my happy song has caught
A strange new note of sadness.

For, farther on a little way,
Where shadows shake and shiver,
I leave this wild, free life of play
To blend with Turkey River.

And Turkey's stream is dully dark,
And sluggish in its motion ;
There's no more hope for wayward lark
Between there and the ocean.

And horrid hornpouts, evil-eyed,
Peer through the reeds and rushes;
And snaky things, that skulk and hide,
The first glad babble hushes.

My banks are high on every side;
No side path to deliver;
There is no way but just to glide
Right on to Turkey River.

And so along this charming route,—
Don't chide me if I dally,—
I'll wind and turn and dance about
Through all this happy valley.

And then, — to sunny bank and brae
A long good-bye forever,—
With one deep sigh I'll slip away
And join the Turkey River.

Again there comes the sound of leaves
That sigh and rustle in the breeze.
The wood-pecker resumes his drum;
The wild bird's trill, the insect's hum
Once more join in the brooklet's rune,
In perfect time, in perfect tune;
And where the branches interlace
The setting sun, with chiding face,
Looks in on us, as if to say,
"Oh, mortal! See, another day
Is lost from out your scanty store,
That naught on earth can e'er restore."

Lost ! lost ! say we ; nay, rather *gained*,
For such days only are retained,
To come to us in after time,
Clothed in a lustre half divine.
And all the woodland voices then
Joined in a hearty, deep — Amen.

BLOSSOM HILL CEMETERY.

How still it is ! There's just a hint of breeze,
Enough to stir the shadows at our feet,
And send a drowsy rustling through the trees,
While all the land rests in a calm complete.

The city's tumult cannot reach us here ;
Its shaded streets seem but long lines of green ;
Above the prison chimney, dark and drear,
A lazy line of curling smoke is seen.

The distant hills, that hedge the landscape 'round,
Are clearly marked against the tranquil sky ;
And through the vale between, with muffled sound,
Like living things, the trains go crawling by.

Robins and sparrows at the fountain's brink
Flash their bright wings beneath the falling spray ;
The chickadee's clear accents seem to sink
In softened cadence on the air to-day.

A startled squirrel leaps in frisky grace
From off the sculptured stone as we draw near, —
To seek his nest's low shelter at its base, —
With more of shyness in his look than fear.

We walk with quiet tread the winding ways,
Reading familiar names on every hand ;
While forms we knew and loved in other days
In fancy come to us — a silent band.

A few feet down we know their bodies lie,
And yet the heavens seem not so far as they !
Their paths are hidden now from mortal eye,
And mysteries enshroud the darksome way.

Peace, foolish heart ! Why do you throb and beat
At thought of that last change, from life to death ?
Is earth so fair, is human life so sweet,
You thus should cling to this uncertain breath ?

Oh, earth is fair ! but o'er its brightest sky
The black clouds gather, and fierce tempests rage ;
Oh, life is sweet ! but its best treasures fly,
And pain and sin dark line its every page.

Worried by toil and care, with grief oppressed —
Is not life's good o'er-balanced by its ill ?
Oh, heart, there'll come sweet peace and perfect rest
When we lie down, at last, at Blossom Hill.

ABOUT A HOUSE.

One sunny day in sunny June,
When summer sounds were all in tune,
When not a blemish could be seen
On nature's brilliant robes of green,
I walked along the tree-arched way
Where Main street's northern limits lay,
To where the city's ample train
Sweeps lightly to the grassy plain.
Close there, though well within the hold
Of this fair 'broidered outer fold,
Stands a brick house of goodly size,
 Close to the busy, stirring street.
So strange its look it drew my eyes
 And held my mind in thrall complete.
Each blind was shut. A broken slat
 Tipped at odd angles here and there,
And unpruned shrubs, a tangled mat,
 Pressed close against it everywhere.
The short brick walk to the front door
With spots of moss was dabbled o'er;
And last year's leaves, all dank and gray,
In close heaps round the stone steps lay.
The tarnished knocker looked so dumb
 I thought, if it could make a sound,
'Twould be so muffled, hoarse, and grum
 That sheeted ghosts might gather round.
Above the door, with threatening frown,
A hornet's nest looked grimly down;

A romping grape-vine, spreading wide,
Had draped with greenness half one side,
And o'er the southern door had made
A swaying, trailing barricade.
No pathway to this entrance led ;
Rank grass had covered every trace,
And bushes grew across the place
As o'er the grave of one long dead.
So lonely did the house appear
It cast a gloom o'er all things near.

* * * * *

Dark, angry clouds were in the sky,
And chilly winds went sweeping by ;
Down through the street the dust clouds whirled,
And darkened leaves before us twirled,
And all was dull on every hand,
For dark November ruled the land,
When once again I sought the way
I walked that pleasant summer day—
For this old dwelling, haunting me
With its recurring loneliness,
I thought its 'livened walls to see
Might rid me of this drear impress.
What, silent yet ! Still barred to light !
No sign of life to glad the sight !
The leaves had dropped from bush and vine
That held the moss-stained walls concealed,
And at the door's dismantled shrine
The rusty padlock hung revealed.

Pale snow-drops clung to naked stalks,
Wind-tossed, beside the leaf-piled walks;
Within the yard, in troubled rout,
Were hand-bills eager to get out,
Or, caught in corners, seemed to be
Frantic in struggles to go free;
And where the orchard once was gay
Dead boughs beneath the old trees lay.

Still this old dwelling, haunting me
With its recurring loneliness,
I thought to learn its history
Might free me from this drear impress.
And so I sought the truth to win.
This is the tale I gathered in :—

A rich old man in his last years
Grew blind and helpless. It appears
He had no children, and his wife
Dying, save for a housemaid's care,
That planned and served his daily fare,
His would have been a cheerless life.
So helpful did this maiden grow,
As friend, protector, guide, and staff,
In time he married her, although
His years exceeded hers by half.
Seeking his every want to tend,
She served him, faithful to the end.
Then was it a surprise when told
This wealth was hers to have and hold?
I cannot say. I only know
It wrought no change for weal or woe

In her plain life. She had no need
Of gold and stocks, nor use, indeed ;
But lets all rest in banks and loans,
Nor does she know how much she owns.
In kitchen work among her friends,
Which is, she says, her proper sphere,
She earns the little that she spends,
And thus lives on from year to year.
The house she'll neither rent nor sell,
Nor let a mortal in it dwell,
Nor from its furnishings will take,
For charity or love's sweet sake,
One item of its ample store
For cherished friend or worthy poor.
When asked, the reason that she brings
Is, "They are my dead husband's things."
So rats and mice, in their wild way,
Hold revels there by night and day,
And tranquil moths, in soundings deep
Of soft old blankets, wake and sleep ;
Dark mildews gather on the wall,
And gray dust settles over all.
'Tis said at times she enters there,
And lets the light in on the gloom,
Walks through each silent, dusty room,
The scenes of her past life and care,
Takes his old portrait from its place,—
'Twas made when he was young and gay,—
Scans every feature of the face,
Then hangs it back and turns away,
Shuts out the light, relocks the door,
And leaves all silent as before.

ACROSS THE PLAINS.

The sun was down ; the moon instead —
 A golden ball, low in the sky —
Now hung above a mountain's head,
 Now ambushed where the forests lie.
The pine groves showed long, ghostly lanes,
As we drove in across the plains.

We felt the calm the night breeze brings
 With cooling touch to brow and cheek,
And dewy scents from growing things
 Came up and passed in changing freak.
The crickets gave out shrill refrains
As we rode in across the plains.

Our wheels were muffled in the sand,
 Our well-shod steeds flashed many a spark,
That seemed to swell the fireflies' band
 And mark our progress through the dark.
Our voices sank to minor strains
As we rolled in across the plains.

Once, slacking speed, we were aware
 Another team was at our side,
Stealing along like things of air,
 To pass us in our homeward ride ;
Without a hint from whip or reins
Our horses sped across the plains.

Then out upon the bluff that bends
Along the Merrimac's low bed ;
Behind we heard our laughing friends,
We saw the city's lights ahead,—
Then down where willows trail like rain
We scurried in from off the plain.
With clamp and roll and thunderous sound
The long, dim bridges let us in,
Where our fair city wrapped us 'round
And joined our clatter to her din.
But where were they, those boastful swains,
Who tried to pass us on the plains?

A WELL-BUILT HOUSE.

[The house here mentioned was one of the oldest garrison houses of Concord, N. H. Though now occupying the humble position of stable and wood-shed, its present owner, Hon. E. S. Nutter, Esq., prizes it greatly for its antiquity, and carefully preserves all its ancient characteristics.]

In the old town of Pennacook,
Many long years ago,
One Edward Abbott built a house
That let the Indians know
'Twas vain to strive against his work
With gun or twanging bow.
He built a house so strong and well
He let all people know
A house of wood may stand secure,
While people come and go,
As solid walls of granite will,
Defying time and foe.

For sixscore years the summer suns
Have warmed his place of rest ;
For sixscore years the winter snows
Have drifted on his breast ;
And yet his work stands firm as when
It bore the builder's test.

We trace the impress of his axe
Along each oaken beam ;
We note the massive clumsiness
Of joint, and brace, and seam ;
The ponderous door with " latch and string "
Enchants us like a dream.

The time-stained stairway seems to wind
Far back into the past ;
And through the small, dim window panes
We fancy we may cast
A look across old Pennacook,
Hedged 'round with forests vast.

And while we glance along the wall
To find the port-holes' trace,
Can we not hear the arrows whiz
And thud about the place?
And aren't we sure that just outside
Lurks many a dusky face ?

The first white native of the town
Beneath this roof drew breath ;
And generations yet unborn
May pass from life to death
While these unyielding timbers stand,
If spared from flame's hot breath.

Perhaps, like that old masterpiece,
 "The Deacon's one-horse shay,"
'Tis built so well that no one part
 Will ever break away;
And when, some hundred years from now,
 There comes an "earthquake day,"

Through this exhausted frame of oak,
 From heavy roof to sill,
There'll run a hint of coming doom
 In one quick, startling thrill,
And then — only a mound of dust
 To mark the builder's skill !

A HUNT.

Supplied with pop-guns, arrows, nets,
 And cages, large and small,
Johnnie and Ben went out one day
 Beyond the garden wall,
To hunt for any curious things
 That walk, or fly, or crawl;
 For they were looking up, you see,
 Wonders for a menagerie.

"O Ben!" cried Johnnie, "just look here!
 A *jungle* — long and wide!
Where lots of wild beasts, birds, and snakes
 Can live and safely hide !

Bananas, bread-fruit, oranges,
Are growing here beside!"
(The jungle was a clump of weeds;
The fruit — a lot of hard brown seeds.)

"Hist, Ben! A tiger, as I live!
A royal Bengalite!
Where are the guns? Move soft! I fear
There'll be a dreadful fight.
Ha! Caught at last! We have him now
In iron cage — all tight!"
(The tiger was a monster toad,
In an old tea-pot safely stowed.)

"Help! help!" cried Bennie. "John, come quick!
A *wild-cat* on a tree,
All ready for a fearful spring!
He's looking right at me!"
John ran, and soon the deadly beast
Was safe as safe could be.
(A caterpillar, large and fat,
Caged in Jane's dollie's new felt hat.)

"I've found," said John, "a long-legged thing!
It might be a giraffe,
Only it has too many legs,
And neck too short by half."
"Ah, yes, a new variety!"
Said Bennie with a laugh.
(A daddy-long-legs, tall and slim;
A collar-box soon sheltered him.)

"I've started out an antelope!

Hi, John! Just stop him there!

He's worth a race. You see this kind

Is extra nice and fair.

The girls will 'O!' and 'Ah!' and say

' 'Tis lovely!' 'Splendid!' 'Rare!'"

(A grasshopper, all sober gray,

In a tin spice-box spent the day.)

"A snake! a snake! O Ben, a *snake*!

He's writhing in and out

Among the trees. A *boa*, too!

Now, mind what you're about,

Or he will have you in his folds;

You know they're *awful* stout!"

(A pill-box held the angle worm

And left him room enough to squirm.)

I wish that I could tell of all

The creatures that they found —

Of how they placed them all in line

Out in the old play ground;

And how they printed hand-bills off

And sent them all around.

I think that you might all look in

By paying, each, a bright new pin.

A BAD FIX.

The yard was a-glitter with sunshine and dew,
The birds were abroad with their musical din,
When over the balsams a bumblebee flew;

He found a big blossom and bumbled right in.

“Oh, the honey!” buzzed he,

“Oh, the pollen I see!

And no bee astir in this garden but me!

“Oh, exquisite nectar! I’ll fill every pocket
(The others will soon hurry up from the clover);

I’ll take the best sips, then I’ll fly like a rocket —

(Buzz! Oh, this dew! It has wet me all over!)

Oh, balsamine honey—

More precious than money!

I’ve got a big load — don’t my pouches look funny?

“Buzz-z! Now I’m off!” Then his gauzy wings spread.

He rose scarce an inch when he back again tumbled;

His load was so heavy it pulled down like lead,

And there on the blossom he floundered and bumbled.

“Buzz-z! Oh, dear me!

A good thing, I see,

Can be very bad if ’tis taken too free.

“I’ll shake off some pollen, and then I’m all right!”

But, wet by the dew, it stuck “close as a brother.”

He worked like a hero; yet do what he might,

He just scraped it off from one claw to another.

Oh, then how he muttered!

He scolded and spluttered,

As on the bright blossom he helplessly fluttered.

A busy old spider stopped short in her spinning
On hearing the noise, and came out of the shade ;
Then, mounting a daisy, she sat there a-grinning,
To see what a fuss the big bumblebee made ;
And a bug, neat and trim,
Hurried up to the brim
Of a dainty blush rose to peep over at him.

An inch-worm was measuring off the bank wall,
He stood on one end to see what was the trouble ;
A grasshopper sprang up a hollyhock tall,
And laughed at the fun till he almost bent double ;
His comrades, moreover,
Came up from the clover,
And witnessed the plight of this gay, selfish rover.

His struggles grew frantic. A mild butterfly
Came kindly, and fanned his hot face with her wing ;
And this, with the sunshine, soon getting him dry,
He fled from the garden, a much humbled thing.
A spry little cricket
Hopped out of a thicket,
And gave him a cheer as he passed through the wicket.

JACK FROST.

The night was cold ; the stars were bright
And all a-twinkle overhead,
When Fannie woke in sudden fright
At a sharp click close by her bed.

She hugged her blankets close around ;
She scarcely breathed, nor dared to stir,
But, listening for another sound,
Watched for some strange thing to occur.

After what seemed a long, long time,
There came a sound like whirring wings,
And then a sort of tinkling chime —
Suggesting ice and frozen things.

Her courage grew ; she peeped without ;
Her room seemed just as yesterday ;
Familiar things were all about,
And cold, o'er all, the starlight lay.

A moving shadow met her eyes ;
She turned to find how it was made.
Ah ! What she saw caused such surprise
She quite forgot to be afraid.

A little figure, all in white,
Was sketching on a window pane ;
His garments must have sent forth light,
Or how could she have seen so plain ?

A dazzling robe, that hung like lace,
Made all of frost work, starred and rayed,
Fell round his form in airy grace,
And on the floor in fullness laid.

A shining something on his head
Looked clear as crystal. Was it ice ?
It seemed by falling star-beams fed,
All woven in a quaint device.

His hair and beard were white as snow,
And made her think of glass fine spun,
Though that ne'er had such rippling flow
Nor into such wild ringlets run.

His eyes, like jets of living flame,
Sent thrills of cold instead of heat;
And sparkling gems, that went and came
Beneath his robe, were on his feet.

Along the glass his fingers flew
Swift as a hum-bird's flashing wing.
While strange, fantastic figures grew
She heard his icy pencil ring.

"I know you, sir! You're Old Jack Frost!"
Said Fanny, sitting up in bed.
"Through *you* my lovely plants were lost!
You scrawled on them; now they are dead."

He laughed, — a little rattling sound,
That fell, she thought, like frozen rain, —
But never paused to look around
Or quit his work upon the pane.

"Is that the way you talk to friends,
My little Miss?" he made reply.
"I killed your buds. To make amends
See how I work to please your eye!

"If choicest blooms from every clime
Were always by, they'd seem less fair.
Contrasts make half the joys of time,
And bring out all its beauties rare.

“ If you will note the lovely things
That all around you I have spread,
You’ll find it far more pleasure brings
Than moaning over blossoms, dead.

“ I’ve half a mind, you whining girl,
To touch my pencil to your nose ! ”
He faced her with a sudden whirl ;
She felt a chill from head to toes.

“ I beg your pardon, dear friend Jack ! ”
She cried, and made a swift retreat
Beneath the sheets ; then, looking back,
“ I’ll speak more kind when next we meet.”

She saw him pass his fingers o’er
The water pitcher in the sink,
Then she remembered nothing more,
For she went fast asleep, I think.

MAMIE’S LETTER.

Dear Clarabell : I’m going to write —
But *don’t* you tell the boys —
What happened yesterday. You see
I’d tired of my toys,
And books, and games, and all of that,
And wanted something new,
And so was looking all about
To see what I might do.

Old Tige — our big Newfoundland dog —
Was lying by the door
A-watching me out of one eye,
With nose close to the floor.
And grandmama was fast asleep,
Sitting straight in her chair,
With spectacles pushed 'way up top
Her lovely, snow-white hair.

She'd been at work a while before
On her night-gown and cap,
And there they were all folded up —
A white heap in her lap.
I thought — I'm sure I do not know
What made me think of it —
That I would put those clothes on Tige,
And see how they would fit.

I put the night-cap on his head
And tied it underneath.
He knew 'twas fun, I *know* he did, —
He laughed with tongue and teeth ;
And the tip end of his big tail
Gave gleeful little thumps
As it went dancing on the mat
In jerky, frisky jumps.

I slipped the night-gown down his back,
And buttoned it all neat ;
I put his fore-legs through the sleeves,
With ruffles round his feet ;

And while I looped the long, white skirt
Just like a polonaise,
He lapped his long, red, lolling tongue
Right up across my face.

Oh, *didn't* he look funny, though?
I just laughed till I cried;
Then suddenly, in our own yard,
Another dog I spied
A-making off with Tiger's bone.
Tige saw him in a flash,
And right out through the open door
He made a frantic dash!

Away down the long street he sped —
He hardly touched the ground;
I saw the nightcap bobbing up
At every onward bound.
I saw the folks all stop and look,
And heard the small boys shout,
And at the windows all along
Were people looking out.

I heard some quick, sharp, growly barks,
And saw a whirling mass
Of black and yellow dog mixed up
With white cloth on the grass;
And then, in fear for dear old Tige,
I dared not look again;
I thought he surely would be killed
'Mong all those boys and men.

Then what would mamma say at sight
Of all this mischief done !
I had another little cry
That was not all for fun.
But soon I heard, along the walk,
Old Tiger's happy bound —
And there he stood ! He'd got his bone,
And he was safe and sound.

But, oh, there *never was* a dog,
I *know*, that looked so queer !
He'd got the nightcap twisted 'round
And hanging on one ear ;
And grandma's gown, all dirt and dust,
Was part of it a-trail,
And part of it, quite banner like,
Was waving from his tail.

He glanced down proudly on his bone,
Then, turning back to me,
He said, without the need of words,
“ I've got it back, you see ! ”
He looked so droll, so brave, so good,
Standing there on the rug,
I put my two arms 'round his neck
And gave him one good hug.

THE HEART OF THE SPRING.

(FROM THE GERMAN OF ARNO HOLZ.)

Beguiled by its shimmering brightness,
A dragon-fly lit in her hair.
An instant, with gauzy wings vibrant,
It paused on the soft, silky snare ;
Then off to the reeds and the rushes
It sped, like a dart, through the air.

She stared at the brilliant small creature.
Had he taken her frizz for a flower?
Oh, the glee in that ripple of laughter !
It stirred every leaf in the bower,
Till the dew-drops, all starting together,
Rolled down in a prismatic shower.

She smoothed down her little white apron,
And shortened her skirts till the sun
Found the stars on her smart little slippers
And set them ablaze — every one.
You could track, by the twinkle and blinkle,
The small feet that tripped down the run.

Blue lilacs with tremble ecstatic
The snow of her neck lightly fanned
As into her gay little basket
Went blossoms and buds through her hand.
But the pansies she held all together
And bound with a blade-of-grass band.

Then down the long avenue flitting, —
Where the low branching castenas grow,
Where the marble fauns leer through the bushes, —
She trilled an old song, soft and low ;
A song that had lulled her to slumber
When moonbeams were bright, long ago :

“ I wish, oh, I wish I could learn
Whence this thrill that all joy is completing !
I wish, oh, I wish I could learn
Where the heart of the spring-time is beating !

“ Clouds, clouds, floating high in the blue !
Brooks, brooks, through the green valley singing !
Pray tell me, if ever you knew,
Whence, whence all this gladness is springing ?

“ O, nightingales, fluting all night !
O, apple-blooms, all the day swinging !
O, sun, with your far-reaching light !
Whence, whence is this ecstasy springing ?

“ I wish, oh, I wish I could know ” —

Ah, out from the shade of a linden
He came with a quick, joyous bound.
The song had no end, and the blossoms
All fell in a heap to the ground.
Two strong arms enfolded the maiden —
And — the heart of the Spring-time was found.

THE OAK WOOD.

(FROM THE GERMAN OF N. LENAN.)

Walking in the holy twilight
Of an oak-wood, heard I there,
'Mid the blooms, a brook's low whisper,
Like a little child in prayer.

And a pleasant terror seized me
As the woods confiding, low,
Seemed about to rustle secrets
That my heart said none should know ;

Seemed about to tell the wonders
Of God's love in thought and will,
Then — as suddenly affrighted
By his nearness — all was still.

WHY?

(FROM THE GERMAN OF MAXIMILIAN BERN.)

Why is it that, with you in sight
From morning till day closes,
My dreams will run through all the night
On nothing but wild roses?

And when I pass a summer day
Where those sweet blooms are teeming,
Why is it, love — O tell me, pray —
Of you all night I'm dreaming?

LOVE.

(FROM THE GERMAN OF FRIEDRICH HALM.)

My heart, I will thee question :

What, then, is love ? Repeat !

“Two spirits with one purpose,

Two hearts with single beat.”

Whence cometh love — this wonder ?

“’Tis here — without a sign.”

How does it fade and vanish ?

“Fade ! *Love* knows no decline !”

Where is it found the purest ?

“Where self is lost to sight.”

And when is it the deepest ?

“When silent as the night.”

Tell me when is love richest ?

“When its gifts freest fall.”

What speech hath love ? “It speaks not ;

It *loveth* — that is all.”

SIGHS.

(FROM THE GERMAN OF EMIL CLAAR.)

See thy own shade on the wall flitting by !

See the smoke-towers, ever fading, ascend !

See the clouds melt, with no trace, from the sky !

So is thy life in beginning and end,

It is to me, as, with no choice,
I must go on from place to place,
And at strange doors, with humble voice,
Beg for love's crumbs with wistful face.

Yes, I could beg of Spring, to-day,
From her fresh flowers one bloom to part;
And of the sun one warming ray —
So cold, so withered is my heart!

Here is my home ; here I abide,
With house and land in fair array.
But there is something here beside —
Unasked, unwished, yet aye to stay.

There stands my house amid its grounds —
A pleasant place, and fair to see ;
But just as sure, within these bounds,
My *grave* is waiting, waiting me !

It is as if Death hovered nigh
In some dark corner, watchful, still,
As spiders wait the hapless fly,
To wind and bind them at their will.

I walk home from the ball — from the dances ;
Grief comes again !
Of the joy, mirth, light, come back no glances —
Only the pain !

I walk home; there is croaking—a raven;
While white, light,
Down comes the snow as if it would graven
All things from sight.

With thy thick fall, with thy wild art,
O silent snow!
Cover my head; cover my heart!
Cover my woe!

WHERE?

(FROM THE GERMAN OF HENRICH HEINE.)

Where will this worn wanderer's
Last resting-place be?
'Neath the palms of the South?
Where the lindens spread free?
Will it be in the desert,
Entombed by strange hands,
Or on the sea's coast,
In the moist, yielding sands?
No matter. God's heaven
Above me will spread;
His stars, as death's tapers,
Will light my low bed.

HOW THE CARES WENT.

(FROM THE GERMAN OF GUSTAVE PARRINS.)

A-weary, once, I sought the green-wood shade ;
My cares came trooping after.
Vainly I ordered back the grim brigade, —
They came — with mocking laughter.

But when we reached the place, from all about
Rose whisperings and chiding ;
The birds sang, “ Quick ! You cares ! Out, out !
Here is no place for hiding ! ”

The grasses straightening up gave them a throw ;
A wind-puff blew them higher ;
Tree branches sent them tossing to and fro ;
Brooks dashed them in the mire.

They found no peace. Some, running, broke their heads
’Gainst giant boulders pelting ;
Some plunged, head first, in wild flowers’ dewy beds,
In flight from sunbeams, melting.

“ There, now,” I cried, when of this worrying crew
No vestige could I find ;
“ See what the wild-wood has in store for you !
The next time stay behind ! ”

THE FISHER.

(FROM THE GERMAN OF GOETHE.)

The waters swelled, the waters rushed,
 Beneath the fisher's look ;
With quiet heart and spirit hushed,
 He watched his line and hook ;
And as he plied his peaceful art,
 Beneath his wondering eyes
He saw the troubled waters part —
 A woman's form arise.

She spake to him, she sang to him :
 " Oh, why dost thou beguile
My creatures up to fiery death,
 With human art and wile ?
Would'st know how happy fishes fare
 Here under, where they dwell ?
Come down to us just as you are
 And be once strong and well !

" Are not sun, moon, and stars of space
 All quickened by the sea ?
Turn to her undulating face,
 Her added beauties see ;
Does not this deeper heaven allure —
 This brighter, wave-cleansed blue ?
See ! Thine own face, refined and pure —
 Calls from this home of dew ! "

The waters rushed, the waters pressed,
They plashed his naked feet.
A restless yearning filled his breast
As when two lovers greet.
She sang to him, she called to him.
Far, far seemed friends and shore;
Half sinking in, half drawn within,
He fell, to rise no more.

THE ALPINE ROSE.

(FROM THE GERMAN OF FEODOR LOWE.)

Far up the height, in mosses bedded,
By snow and ice half veiled from sight,
To loneliness and silence wedded,
The alpine rose blossoms to light.

No moist spring zephyr ever kisses
Or turns its leaves with playful grace;
All tender light and shade it misses; —
A lost smile on the rock's stern face.

Up, bit by bit, the ice wall running,
In awesome solitude to rest,
As some sweet joy — all presence shunning —
Finds rapture in its own lone breast.

O blessed they whose lives, though hidden
Where all about is drear and cold,
With earth's dear, common gifts forbidden,
Yet high to heaven sweet flowers unfold.

BARBARIC.

Oh, don't you wish you could live like the savages,—
Free as the wild birds that skim the spring air,—
Far in the land that the grim grizzly ravages,
Grandly at home in a cavern or lair?

Never to think of the claims of society,—
No claims but friendship's and mercy's allowed,—
Never to feel you are shocking propriety
If your own gait does not swing with the crowd.

Never again o'er a garment's complexity
Work yourself feverish, fret yourself gray ;
Never again to endure the perplexity :
“ *Was* that word spoken in just the right way ? ”

No more of carpets nor drapings artistical,
Breakable bric-à-brac doomed to a fall,
Cumbersome art works of excellence mystical,
Wearisome pictures a-tilt on the wall.

Too much of sweetness aye bringeth satiety,
Too much of discipline breedeth revolt.
Even in goodness is wanted variety.
Too much of culture! Is that not a fault?

Oh, don't you wish you could live like the savages,—
Blue sky above you, beneath you the sod,—
In the far land that the grim grizzly ravages,
Nearer to nature and nearer to God?

ON TILTON HILL.

At twilight hour, on Tilton Hill,
We pause to view the vale below;
The village lies misty and still,
With all its evening lamps aglow.

The gloomy woodlands, dark as night,
Give silvery hints of Suncook's tide,
And Catamount, that rambling height,
Stretches its length the other side.

Uncertain lights through bushes steal,
Where Italy's dark sons encamp,
And gritty sounds from hoof and wheel
Come muffled in the evening damp.

Dogs bark, boys call, gay insects trill,
But there's no discord in the air;
All sounds come softened to the hill;
And now the church bells ring for prayer.

Three bells, unlike in key and tone,
But blending in a pleasing chime;
Each with a cadence of its own
Sends out its call to place and time.

How soothingly the peals resound,
With lingering falls that thrill and die.
Hush! Did you catch that answering sound —
Seeming no part of earth or sky?

Three bells — but only one we know
Can that far, airy silence break.
Ah, like the prayers that rise below,
How few the heavenly echoes wake!

AT FIVE O'CLOCK.

No need have I of gong or bell,
Or whirring, jarring clock alarms,
The early morning hour to tell
And draw me from dear Morpheus' arms;
For regular as time and tide,
And certain as our coming fate,
With fall that echoes far and wide,
Two heavy feet tramp by my gate
At five o'clock.

They have a long and swinging stride,
That seems to measure off the ground,
Without a pause or swerve aside,
With not one faint uncertain sound.
The first far click of those firm heels
Cuts through my sleep and dreams must fly.
I watch the steady growing peals
That come and come and then go by
At five o'clock.

Is there a face — is there a form,
Is there a heart with human beat,
That, hot or cold, in calm or storm,
Goes by our door above those feet?
Or can it be some phantom thing —
Some phantom thing with ghostly tread,
Forever doomed to wandering
And daily through our street is led
At five o'clock?

All, all is veiled in grayest mist
That fancy, ever wide awake
For mysteries to turn and twist,
Bids wild, fantastic figures take.
And when I hear those footsteps ring
I see — not one — but hundreds throng —
All stepping with that stately swing
Our quiet, sober street along
At five o'clock.

AN OLD CHURCH SPEAKS.

Houses, like people, have their day,
And then, as surely, fade and fall;
A transient youth, in bright array,—
A middle age, in sober gray,—
And then decay that darkens all.
But there's no loss in earth or skies,
When stars go down others arise.

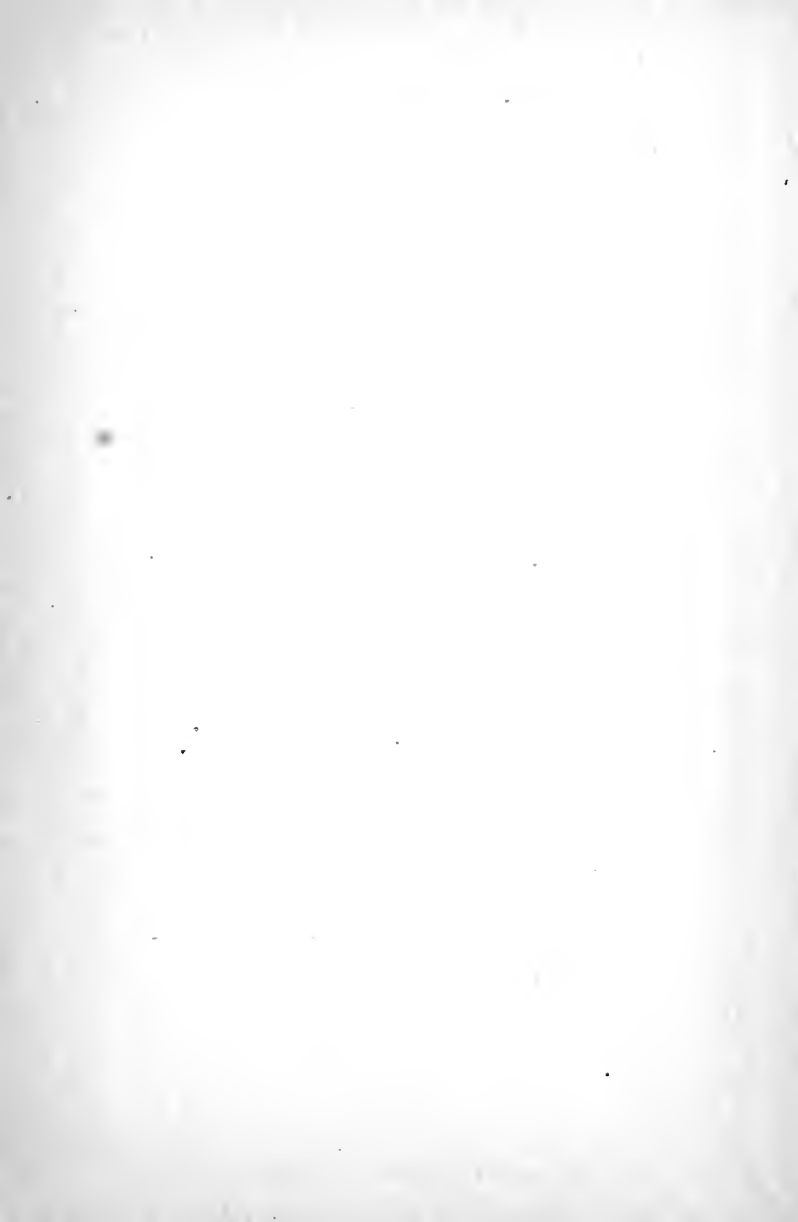
While I have felt the chill of years
Through all my thrilling timbers run,
I've heard, mayhap with dulling ears,
Your growing plans, your hopes, your fears,
And know my work is well-nigh done.
'Tis well; God's house should be as fair
As you who love him can prepare.

All through the fleeting summer days
I've watched your new house slowly rise,
With eager rush, with dull delays —
Till well-defined in modern ways,
It stands, clear cut, against the skies.
Its walls — how full of promises!
And mine — hold only memories.

Here voices whisper, soft and low,
That now in angel choirs are led,
And down these alleys footsteps go,
And phantom forms flit to and fro
That those new aisles will never tread.
Each joy and grief has left its sign.
The past, and all its wealth, are mine.

The past is dear, but it is dead ;
It has no shred of hope or grace.
Growth, progress, faith — all look ahead ;
Your working fields before you spread ;
The old must aye to new give place.
Each is, in turn, a step that brings
Its follower to better things.





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